

*Refugee Hall*

**SECRET**

**HISTORY**  
*Of The*  
**WAR REFUGEE BOARD**  
**WITH SELECTED DOCUMENTS**

January 22, 1944 - September 15, 1945

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
War Refugee Board





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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Nazis, commencing in 1933, undertook a sinister campaign to exterminate the Jews and other minority groups under their control as a principal means toward the ultimate subjugation of the free peoples of the world. Waged with fury and calculated determination, this campaign reached unprecedented heights in 1943 when systematic mass murder in cold blood, mechanized atrocities, organized brutality, and deliberate starvation were the order of the day for millions of innocent people in Nazi Europe. The conscience of democratic peoples everywhere was shocked and offended by such cold and thorough persecution of helpless peoples selected for death because of their race, religion, or political belief.

The repulsion, abhorrence, and anger aroused in Americans were manifested to the world when President Roosevelt, on January 22, 1944, established a special governmental agency, the War Refugee Board, to rescue as many as possible of these helpless victims, as an integral part of the total war against Nazi principles. The Executive Order creating the Board declared: "It is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war." 1/ This extraordinary Order not only stated the Government's policy in unmistakable terms but provided the Board with the powers and the means necessary to carry it out. The War Refugee Board translated the Government's policy into prompt action.

1/ Executive Order No. 9417 of January 22, 1944, comprising document 1, and White House Press Release of same date, comprising document 2. At the time this Executive Order was signed there were resolutions pending in both the Senate (S.R. No. 203, introduced November 9, 1943) and the House of Representatives (H.R. Nos. 350 and 352, also introduced on November 9, 1943) calling upon the President to establish such a refugee commission. The Senate resolution had been referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, from which it was favorably reported on December 20, 1943.

The Board and its Functions. The Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of War, the top-ranking Cabinet officers, were named the members of the Board, which was directly responsible to the President.

The functions of the Board as prescribed by the President included without limitation "the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for (a) the rescue, transportation, maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and (b) the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims." The Board was directed to enlist through appropriate channels the cooperation and participation of foreign governments and to cooperate with existing international refugee, relief, and rescue organizations in the execution of such plans and programs.

The State, Treasury, and War Departments were directed to execute at the request of the Board such parts of the Board's plans, programs, and measures falling within their respective spheres. All agencies and departments were directed to supply or obtain such information, assistance, and facilities as the Board might require in carrying out the provisions of the Order. The Board and the three departments named were further authorized to accept the services or contributions of private persons or organizations, state agencies, or the agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of the Order.

Executive Director. John W. Pehle, Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and former Director of Treasury's Foreign Funds Control, was appointed Executive Director of the Board. He served in this capacity until January 27, 1945, when he resigned to take charge of the Treasury's Procurement and Surplus Property Division. Under Mr. Pehle's guidance, the basic programs and policies were established that made possible the saving and protection of thousands of Nazi victims. He was succeeded on January 27, 1945, by Brigadier General William O'Dwyer, who served as Executive Director of the Board until its dissolution on September 15, 1945. 1/ The basic existing policies and programs were continued to the fullest extent possible under General O'Dwyer. It became his chief task, however, to meet the intensified emergencies that developed in the months immediately preceding the surrender of Germany.

Special Representatives Abroad. Promptly upon the formation of the Board, steps were taken to station Special Representatives of the Board in the strategic areas of Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Great Britain, Italy, and North Africa. These representatives were accorded diplomatic status and designated as Special

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1/ Executive Order No. 9614 of September 14, 1945.



Attachés on war refugee matters to the respective United States Missions by the Department of State. War refugee matters in Spain and the Soviet Union were handled through the United States Embassies without special Board representation.

The Board's Special Representatives were not for the most part professional refugee relief workers. They were, however, men of outstanding competence who selflessly and devotedly tackled their difficult assignments of saving helpless people in the enemy's hands. The Board obtained for them extraordinary authority under the Trading with the enemy Act and instructed them to cut red tape and take bold action wherever necessary.<sup>1/</sup> They had the task of handling Board relations with the respective United States Missions in an unprecedented and delicate field. In a few cases, with the consent of the local Mission, they even had to deal directly with representatives of the enemy. The only medium of communication with Washington and other Board offices abroad was by cable. In the coordination and direction of the field operations of private agencies, the Board's representatives were obliged to distinguish between relief groups doing effective and honest work and those groups and individuals of dubious motives. In this difficult work, however, they were fortified by the strength of the full support they constantly received from the Board in Washington.

Washington Staff. The Board operated with a small staff in Washington composed largely of highly trained professional people, including several refugee specialists.<sup>2/</sup> This small staff, which never exceeded 30 persons, was possible both because of the competence and deep interest of the personnel and because, as authorized in its Executive Order, the Board utilized to the extent possible the personnel, supplies, facilities, and services of the State, Treasury, and War Departments.

Cooperation with Other Governments and International Organizations. The Board from the outset made every effort to enlist the cooperation and participation of other governments and interested international organizations. All United States diplomatic officers abroad were instructed to aid in effectuating the Board's programs.<sup>3/</sup> They were directed to urge the governments to which they were accredited to lend every possible assistance to this Government's efforts to save the persecuted minorities in Nazi hands and to

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 120 to Ankara dated February 12, 1944, comprising document 3. Similar instructions were sent to all Board representatives abroad.

<sup>2/</sup> List of Washington Staff of War Refugee Board, comprising document 4.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 634 to London dated January 25, 1944, comprising document 5; subsequently repeated to all other United States Missions.

take affirmative action similar to that of the United States in creating a special War Refugee Board.<sup>1/</sup> Special instructions were sent to the United States Missions in neutral countries to urge those governments to accept all refugees who might succeed in reaching their borders and to make public that they would do so. At the same time, in order to facilitate acceptance of this proposal, the United States Government through the War Refugee Board assured the neutral governments that it would arrange for the maintenance of newly arrived refugees and for their evacuation to other places of safety as soon as possible. The cooperation and help of strategic neutral countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, and Turkey were keystones in many of the Board's programs.<sup>2/</sup>

The Holy See and the Vatican hierarchy throughout Europe were solicited time and again for special assistance both as a channel of communication to the leaders and people of enemy territory and as a means of rendering direct aid to the suffering victims of Hitler. The Catholic clergy saved and protected many thousands and the Vatican rendered invaluable assistance to the Board and to the persecuted in Nazi hands.<sup>3/</sup>

The principal international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement were the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Intergovernmental Committee was founded in 1938 and included in its membership the United States, Great Britain, Russia, a number of other Allies and some of the neutral countries. The Committee's primary concern was the rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, and it had found it difficult for political and other reasons to undertake any rescue and relief operations in enemy territory. Shortly after its creation, the Board invited Sir Herbert Emerson, the Committee's director, to come to Washington for consultation. During his visit an agreement concerning working relations between the two organizations was reached. The Board's efforts to save and bring relief to victims inside enemy territory were to be assisted to the extent possible by the Intergovernmental Committee and the latter was to be supported by the Board in any rescue work the Committee might decide to finance or undertake. The two organizations also agreed to keep each other advised of their respective programs and operations to prevent duplication and to

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 774 to London dated January 31, 1944; substance repeated on February 29, 1944, in a Circular Airgram to other United States Missions, comprising document 6.

<sup>2/</sup> See Cooperation with Other Governments and the Vatican.

<sup>3/</sup> Ibid.

ensure full support of programs requiring joint or cooperative effort. In addition, the Board obtained an allocation of \$2,000,000 from the President's Emergency Fund for payment to the Committee as the United States Government's share of the Committee's 1944 operational budget. The Committee spent the bulk of these funds for refugee relief operations in France, Hungary, and Rumania, using the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee as its agent.1/

The Board asked for and obtained UNRRA help in connection with the finding of temporary shelters for rescued victims, for their transportation to such havens, and their maintenance in transit. UNRRA camps in the Middle East, Italy, and North Africa were prepared for the reception of thousands of rescued refugees from Yugoslavia, Italy, and Spain.2/

The services of the neutral International Committee of the Red Cross were solicited and obtained chiefly for official Board relief deliveries inside enemy territory and as a channel of communication to Nazi officials and collaborators.3/ The Board also appealed to the Committee time and time again to take direct and aggressive action to obtain humanitarian treatment for the helpless minorities being persecuted so viciously by the Germans. For many months, however, request after request from the Board met with the answer that the Germans would not permit the proposed action. During the final months of the war, the International Red Cross undertook negotiations with the Germans and finally obtained permission to station personnel in the principal German concentration centers. The Committee in these last months also delivered Board food parcels by the thousands on trucks provided by the Board and manned with Red Cross personnel.

Relations with Private American Relief Agencies. The creation of the Board and the pronouncement of a firm national policy to save the persecuted minorities of Europe immediately placed the full force and prestige of the United States Government behind all efforts to save these innocent people. The established private American relief agencies concerned with refugee problems had for many years before the outbreak of war in Europe tried to save and bring relief to the victims of Nazi persecution. After hostilities commenced, the economic blockade of Europe and the prohibitions against trading or communicating with the enemy made it impossible for these agencies to continue to finance and carry out effective relief and rescue work inside German-controlled areas.

- 1/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees.
- 2/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.
- 3/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: International Red Cross.



One of the most important functions of the War Refugee Board was to enable these private agencies fully to utilize their resources for rescue and relief work.<sup>1/</sup> They had seasoned personnel in the neutral countries, established contacts with underground and resistance workers in enemy territory, deep concern for the problem, and quickly available funds. The Board requested all interested private organizations to submit plans and suggestions to the Board and to consult with and advise its staff concerning the development of techniques and programs. The response of the agencies was a magnanimous offer to help the Board in all possible ways. The work of the Board became a joint undertaking of government and private agencies, and valuable time was gained by making immediate use of all readily available facilities. The Board operated where only a government could operate and the private agencies wherever they could.

The Board obtained for the private agencies governmental permission to send funds into enemy territory, governmental permission to communicate with persons in enemy territory, the help of United States diplomats in dealing with other governments, the use of government communication channels, and the guidance of government officials in developing and organizing programs of rescue and relief in enemy territory.

The private agencies, on their part, rendered invaluable and outstanding service to the Board in the development, financing, and execution of plans and projects. No feasible program suffered for lack of funds, because of the generosity of the private agencies.

Approximately \$20,000,000 in private funds was licensed by the United States Treasury Department for transfer abroad for private rescue and relief projects, which were coordinated and carried out under the guidance and control of the Board's representatives abroad. Over \$15,000,000 was provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, over \$1,000,000 by the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee, and over \$300,000 by the World Jewish Congress.

Government Funds for Board Purposes. The amount of government funds expended for all Board purposes was very small. Initially, arrangements were made with the Bureau of the Budget for the allocation from the President's Emergency Fund of \$1,000,000 for administrative and other expenses of the Board.<sup>2/</sup> The Board spent approximately \$465,000 of this amount, the balance being returnable to the President's Emergency Fund as unobligated during the period ending December 31, 1944, or unexpended funds returned from abroad.

<sup>1/</sup> See Cooperation with Private Organizations.

<sup>2/</sup> Letter from President Roosevelt to the Secretary of the Treasury dated January 29, 1944, comprising document 7.



In conformity with the provisions of the Russell Amendment 1/ requiring Congressional appropriations for the operation beyond one year of agencies created by Executive Order, the Board in December 1944 requested and was granted an allocation by the Congress of the sum of \$150,000 from the President's Emergency Fund, to finance its administration and operations for the last six months of the fiscal year 1945. 2/ From the unexpended balance of approximately \$68,000 of this appropriation, the Board sought and obtained in June 1945 permission from the Congress to use \$16,000 for expenses of liquidation in the fiscal year 1946. 3/

The sums of \$1,068,750 and \$1,125,000 from the Congressional Appropriation for Foreign War Relief were directed by the President on September 12, 1944, and January 31, 1945, respectively, to be allocated for the purchase, packaging, and shipping of War Refugee Board food parcels destined for civilian detainees in German concentration camps.

Private donations totaling \$101,374.00 were received by the government for War Refugee Board purposes. The largest donation of \$100,000 was made on January 27, 1944, by the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, and contributions of over a thousand dollars were received from individuals. All of these contributions were used for Board projects and not for administrative expenses.

Board Programs. The task of saving and bringing aid to innocent and helpless people in the hands of the enemy was complex, hazardous, and difficult. The main obstacle which faced the Board was the adamant attitude of the enemy. The Nazis were determined to wipe out innocent minorities and did not regard them as being protected by any law, national or international. They would allow no consideration of conscience, decency, or law to relax their grip on any of the peoples under their subjugation. Only considerations of the need for labor in the German war effort and possible advantage in retaining valuable hostages in case of defeat would govern the Nazis in allowing any of these people to live. Nevertheless, the Board, armed with the authority granted in its Executive Order, directly and forcefully attacked the problem within the framework of the successful prosecution of the United Nations' war effort. Time was very short and the situation very extreme. The Board took the position from the beginning that precedent and red tape had to be eliminated and bold unprecedented action taken if any lives were to be saved.

1/ Section 213 of the Independent Offices Appropriation Act for the Fiscal Year 1945.

2/ Public Law 529, 78th Congress, approved December 22, 1944.

3/ Public Law 132, 79th Congress, approved July 5, 1945.

The programs planned and developed by the Board proceeded simultaneously in three directions. First, were the measures designed to save refugees from persecution and death by effecting their physical evacuation from enemy territory to havens of safety, by concealing them from the enemy, or by arranging for their extraordinary acquisition of the status of protected nationalities. Second, were the more widely aimed psychological measures which sought to influence the Hitlerite forces, particularly their subordinates and satellites, not to cooperate in the Nazi policy of persecution and extermination of minorities and in the atrocities against Jews and other civilians. Third, were the means by which the Board attempted to obtain better conditions for the deportees and detainees in German concentration camps and to sustain their lives until their ultimate rescue or liberation. These programs and projects are discussed in detail in Sections II, III, and IV of this report.

Rescue Operations Clandestine. The operations planned and developed by the Board to pull victims out of enemy hands to the safe neutral areas contiguous to Nazi territory involved complex problems of planning, organization, coordination, negotiation, and the use of unusual techniques. Full use had to be made of the resourcefulness, ingenuity, and contacts of resistance groups and underground operators. Evacuation from German-controlled territory for specially marked victims was not possible on an official and open basis. Funds and supplies were sent in to trusted agents in enemy areas to hide refugees from the Nazis, maintain and safeguard them, and transport them through underground channels to safety. Lesser German officials were bribed. False identification papers were supplied. Food was provided families of the resistance groups who concealed and protected the refugees. Border officials were bribed to pass refugees. Exit and entrance visas were procured and transportation by boat or by rail was provided for evacuation to safe areas. Tens of thousands were rescued from the Nazis by these clandestine means.

Rescue Operations Facilitated by New Treasury Licensing Policy. The financing of rescue operations by means of funds transferred from the United States was made possible by an important change in policy of the Treasury and State Departments immediately prior to the establishment of the Board. It was decided that the United States Government, in view of military developments favoring the Allied armies and because of the compelling humanitarian considerations, would permit established private agencies to transfer funds from the United States to their representatives in neutral countries to finance the rescue of persecuted peoples under Nazi control. A basic Treasury Department license under the Trading with the Enemy Act was devised to cover all such transfers. This license authorized the necessary communication with persons in enemy territory and the financing of rescue operations under specified controls and techniques designed to bring no financial benefit to the enemy. After

the establishment of the Board all requests for licenses of this type were channeled through it and issued only upon its recommendation, ensuring coordination and government direction of all rescue programs.1/

The British Government formally objected to the United States' new licensing policy, taking the position that such licenses afforded the enemy an opportunity to acquire foreign exchange for use in the prosecution of the war. The United States State Department, with the concurrence of the Board and the Treasury Department, replied that this Government had concluded that the saving of lives far outweighed any possible danger involved in permitting the enemy to acquire relatively insubstantial quantities of foreign exchange and that the United States intended to continue the licensing policy it had been pursuing for several months.2/ As a matter of fact, the controls specified in these licenses with respect to the acquisition of local currencies for use in enemy territory were so tight that of the more than twenty million dollars transferred to neutral areas for Board projects only a trickle of free exchange seeped into enemy areas. Most of this went into the hands and private hoards of individual border guards. Throughout the existence of the Board no payment of ransom to the enemy was permitted to be made.

Special Negotiations for the Release of Jews from the Nazis. With the defection in Nazi ranks evidenced by the attack on Hitler's life and the mounting successes of the Allied armies in the spring and summer of 1944, the Gestapo showed signs of shifting their interest from the biological aspects of Jewish extermination to the purely military benefits in labor, goods, and money that could be derived from the Jews in their hands. Some German officials, frightened by world reaction to the persecution of Jews in Hungary and by the rapid deterioration of the German military situation, hoped to gain a measure of personal protection through better treatment of Jewish hostages under their control.

These attitudes were typified by a series of German-inspired proposals which came to the attention of the Board commencing in May 1944. These proposals are discussed in Section II M of this report.

Psychological Warfare Essential Feature of Board's Work. From the beginning it was the opinion of the Board that one of the best, if not the best, means of saving large numbers of victims of enemy oppression from death lay in the possibility of changing the actions and attitudes of the enemy particularly of Axis satellites, functionaries, and subordinates. Accordingly, an essential feature of its program was the development and use of psychological pressures to convince the governments and people of Germany and the satellite countries that this Government and the other United Nations viewed

1/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies.  
Other United States Agencies.

2/ See Cooperation with Other Governments: Great Britain.



most seriously the persecutions inflicted by the enemy and were determined to see to it that those responsible would be punished. The Board's psychological programs are discussed in Section III of this report.

Aggressive Steps Taken To Bring Relief to Victims Inside Enemy Territory. The Nazi plan to wipe out all traces of "inferior" races included killing by starvation and deliberate neglect as well as by other direct means. It was therefore the Board's duty to take vigorous steps to get food and other relief supplies to the starving inmates of German concentration camps.<sup>1/</sup> This was a difficult task. It was the established policy of the British-American blockade authorities to permit no food shipments through the blockade to enemy territory other than for prisoners of war and interned civilians of belligerent nations who were recognized as assimilated prisoners by the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention. This Convention contained guarantees of food parcel deliveries to prisoners of war and regular visitations and reports by International Red Cross personnel on the numbers and conditions of prisoners. The Germans would not regard the Geneva Convention as applying to racial deportees or political prisoners who were nationals of countries under German control.

Since assimilation to the status of prisoners of war would have obtained the greatest amount of relief and protection for these internees, the Board undertook to obtain German agreement to accord such status to them. The Board repeatedly submitted its proposal to the Germans through the Vatican, the neutral governments, and the International Red Cross. The Nazis, however, presented a stone wall of refusal to such requests. The Jews and political detainees in German hands remained "unassimilated" throughout the war.

A few months before the Board was set up, private American relief agencies had obtained permission to send small quantities of food parcels from neutral areas to specifically named unassimilated internees in German concentration camps, a slight relaxation of the strict policy of the Allied blockade authorities concerning relief shipments to enemy territory. The Board made possible the expansion of these private programs and the initiation of new ones by obtaining broader licenses and blockade clearances. The food supplies for these programs came solely from neutral countries, and delivery was effected through the International Red Cross.

The War Refugee Board set up its own program to supplement these private relief projects. It arranged for the shipment of food

1/ See Relief Programs.



packages from the United States, financed from emergency funds of the President, for distribution by the International Red Cross to civilian detainees in German concentration camps.

Havens of Refuge Found for Escaped Refugees. The Executive Order establishing the Board directed it to develop and take measures for the establishment of havens of refuge for victims of enemy oppression. The Board immediately undertook to arrange for such havens in French North Africa. Through its efforts Camp Marechal Lyautey near Casablanca was prepared and opened for refugees who were evacuated from Spain. A second refugee center was later set up at Philippeville in North Africa. Refugee camps in the Middle East were expanded to shelter thousands of refugees from southern Europe. Palestine was a ready haven for Jews escaping the enemy; many thousands from the Balkans and Central Europe were received there under arrangements made by the Board. Safe haven in Switzerland and Sweden was arranged for thousands of other refugees and possible havens in many other countries were thoroughly explored but found impractical.1/

In the United States through the efforts of the Board refuge was provided in June 1944 for 1,000 refugees who had escaped to overcrowded Southern Italy. They were brought to the United States outside the immigration laws to an Emergency Refugee Shelter established by President Roosevelt at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York.2/

The President, in advising the Congress of this action, specified that the refugees would remain in the Oswego Shelter under appropriate security restrictions until they could be returned to their homelands after the termination of the war. The War Refugee Board was given over-all responsibility for this project and the actual administration of the camp was assigned to the War Relocation Authority of the Department of the Interior. Since the close of the war in Europe, approximately 65 of these people have returned home. But the majority of the over 900 who remain confined at Oswego are non-repatriables. They are in the main stateless Jews from Germany, Austria, and the Balkans, or nationals of countries to which they do not wish to return. The solution of the problem of the ultimate resettlement of these people depends upon a United Nations' determination of the problem of permanently displaced peoples. Pending that determination, the United States is faced with the problem of permitting the refugees to remain here under conditions consistent with the humanitarian ideals that motivated the government in bringing them to the United States and with the conditions of freedom surrounding them. In view of the contemplated termination of the War Refugee Board, and the length of time needed to solve the problems of the Oswego refugees,

1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement.

2/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.

over-all responsibility for the Oswego project was transferred to the Department of the Interior on June 6, 1945.

Board Proposal for Strong Policy on War Crimes. The threat of punishment for all who participated in the Axis persecution of innocent minorities including Jews and other nationals of Axis countries was a basic point in the Board's psychological warfare programs. Repeated threats of this kind were issued to the Nazis and their cohorts.

The Board learned in the summer of 1944 that the United Nations War Crimes Commission had made no plans for the punishment of persons guilty of crimes against Axis Jews on the theory that there was no precedent under international law for including as war crimes acts committed by an enemy nation or its nationals against its own subjects or the subjects of other enemy nations. The Board therefore strongly urged that the State Department issue a declaration of United States Government policy which would make it clear that this Government regarded as war criminals those members of the Axis who committed crimes against stateless persons and Axis nationals. It pointed out that failure to regard them as war criminals and plan for their punishment would not only discredit those having made previous threats but render it more difficult to deter similar criminal conduct in the future. The Board also urged that the United States representative on the United Nations War Crimes Commission be instructed to insist upon the adoption by that Commission of a program designed to effectuate such a policy. This position was finally taken by the United States Government and incorporated in the program of the United Nations for punishment of war criminals.1/

Through its representatives abroad and tested contacts in Europe, the Board was kept fully advised concerning the German campaign of extermination and torture. Reports and accounts from these sources accumulated in the files of the Board. They clearly substantiated the fact of the revolting atrocities and, in some cases, named their perpetrators. Two of these reports, eyewitness accounts of events which occurred at the notorious extermination centers established by the Germans at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southwestern Poland, were released to the public in November 1944, in order that the American public might read and understand the frightful happenings in the German concentration camps.

When the war in Europe ended and the cases against Nazi war criminals were being prepared, all such reports in the Board's files were made available to the War Department for study and possible use as evidence in the prosecution of Axis criminals.

1/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: United Nations War Crimes Commission.

Board's Work Terminated When Germany Was Defeated. When the war in Europe ended, the specific task assigned to the War Refugee Board was terminated. The accomplishments of the Board cannot be evaluated in terms of exact statistics, but it is clear, however, that hundreds of thousands of persons as well as the tens of thousands who were rescued through activities organized by the Board, continued to live and resist as a result of its vigorous and unremitting efforts, until the might of the Allied armies finally saved them and the millions of others who survived the Nazi holocaust.

## II A. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH TURKEY

When the War Refugee Board came into being in January 1944, the Turkish gateway was technically open to small groups of refugees en route to Palestine. Since late 1942 a system had been in effect under which highly selective lists of persons approved by the British for Palestine certificates were submitted to the Turkish Government with the request that transit visas be granted to the persons named in Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary. In order to prevent the overloading of Turkish trains, however, Turkey had limited the issuance of such visas to nine "persons" per country per week. Another factor serving to impede the flow of refugees was the Turkish requirement that a new group of emigrants might be admitted to Turkey only when the preceding group had left Turkish soil.

Hungarian and Rumanian authorities had permitted a modest number of families to emigrate under this scheme. Moreover, the restriction imposed by the Turks on transit had in some instances been liberally interpreted so as to constitute as "persons" family groups having as many as five members. Few persons had come out of Bulgaria, however, the Bulgarian Government in April 1943 having prohibited both the exit of Jews from Bulgaria and their transit through that country, thus bringing to a virtual standstill the overland emigration of Jews from Axis Europe to and through Turkey.<sup>1/</sup>

While clandestine escapes were undertaken from time to time by terrorized victims of the Nazi ideology - both by land and, in the case of Greece as well as the Balkan countries, across the Aegean and Black Seas, such desperate and sporadic efforts were not always successful. The costly nature of the operations involved further limited the number of persons who were able to escape the Nazi terror as a result of their own efforts.

Special Representative Appointed by the Board. As a first step toward opening the Turkish gateway for an increased flow of endangered persons from occupied areas, the State Department on January 25, 1944,

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<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 574 from Ankara dated February 20, 1944.



cabled Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt asking that he approach the Turkish Government, explain the United States refugee policy, and solicit the active cooperation of the Turkish Government in this connection. 1/ Shortly thereafter Ira Hirschmann was named Special Representative of the Board for Turkey and Special Attaché on war refugee matters to the United States Embassy in Ankara. 2/ Board Representative Hirschmann reached Ankara on February 14, 1944, and energetically began the development and implementation of programs through which the Board was instrumental in rescuing several thousand persons from among the persecuted minorities of Europe. 3/ At the Board's request as occasions arose, Board Representative Hirschmann also evaluated and made recommendations concerning the proposals and accomplishments of private organizations whose operations the Board facilitated.

Important Roles Played by Private Organizations. Among the private organizations through which rescue and relief operations were conducted in Turkey, major credit is due the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

Early in the Board's program a basic license was issued to the Joint Distribution Committee by the Treasury Department, permitting it to communicate with persons in enemy territory and to carry on the requisite financial transactions involved in the rescue of persons from enemy territory. 4/ The remittance of \$50,000 was subsequently authorized to the Joint Distribution Committee representative in Turkey and was used for the transportation of refugees from Turkey to Palestine. Other remittances totaling \$641,353 were made by the Joint Distribution Committee to Palestine as reimbursement to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem for expenses incurred in evacuating refugees from the Balkans to Palestine.

In addition to the remittances made by the Joint Distribution Committee to Turkey to finance rescue and relief in the Balkans, a large part of the several million dollars sent by that organization to Switzerland 5/ was spent in evacuating endangered persons from Hungary and the Balkans through Turkey. Other funds sent by the Joint Distribution Committee to Sweden 6/ were used for rescue and relief operations in Hungary, many of the persons so rescued having been evacuated through the Turkish gateway. Thousands of refugees from Greece, Hungary, and the Balkans were thus enabled to proceed from enemy territory.

- 1/ Cable No. 68 to Ankara dated January 25, 1944; the instructions cabled Ambassador Steinhardt were similar to those dispatched to Ambassador Winant in London, which appear as document 5.
- 2/ Cable No. 120 to Ankara dated February 12, 1944, comprising document 3; see also Cable No. 270 from Ankara dated February 16, 1944.
- 3/ Following a report to the Board in person in April, Board Representative Hirschmann returned to Turkey in June, completing this second mission in October 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 532 to Ankara dated June 17, 1944.
- 5/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.
- 6/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

Another \$100,000 was sent by the Joint Distribution Committee for the purchase in Turkey of food parcels for distribution by the International Red Cross to internees in enemy territory.<sup>1/</sup>

Another organization through which evacuations were successfully made was the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. Upon the recommendation of the Board, this organization was licensed by the Treasury to carry on evacuation operations in Hungary and the Balkans,<sup>2/</sup> and a remittance of \$25,000 to the Vaad Hahatzala representative in Turkey was made.

Treasury licenses were likewise issued to the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe<sup>3/</sup> and to the International Rescue and Relief Committee,<sup>4/</sup> each being permitted to remit \$5,000 to representatives in Turkey. Both of these licenses carried provisions dictated by experience acquired by the Board, to the effect that funds were to be utilized only as authorized by Ambassador Steinhardt or Board Representative Hirschmann in effecting rescues from enemy territory. The International Rescue and Relief Committee was later authorized to send an additional \$30,000 to Turkey for continued operations, largely on behalf of non-Jewish refugees.<sup>5/</sup>

In order to facilitate any worthwhile projects for which private financing could not be arranged, Board funds were placed at Board Representative Hirschmann's disposal in Ankara, but at no time was it necessary to draw upon these funds to accomplish the projects undertaken.<sup>6/</sup>

All told, private American agencies were licensed by the Treasury to remit a total of \$215,000 to Turkey for rescue and relief activities using that country as a base. As indicated, this amount was in addition to substantially greater sums remitted to Switzerland and Sweden for other rescue and relief activities "in enemy territory," as a result of which thousands of persons were enabled to utilize the Turkish gateway in fleeing from Hungary, Greece, and the Balkans.

British Policy on Admissions to Palestine Ascertained. Early in February 1944, in order to clarify at the outset reports concerning the British position on admissions to Palestine, the only haven open to refugees evacuated to Turkey, discussions were held in Washington with

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- 1/ See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations.
  - 2/ Cable No. 311 to Ankara dated April 8, 1944.
  - 3/ Cable No. 616 to Ankara dated July 7, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 618 to Ankara dated July 8, 1944.
  - 5/ Cable No. 698 to Ankara dated August 12, 1944.
  - 6/ Cable No. 2407 from Ankara dated December 26, 1944.

representatives of the British Embassy. The British subsequently forwarded to the Board, under date of February 18, 1944, a copy of a statement the British had addressed to Secretary of State Hull on September 9, 1943, confidentially disclosing the British position in this matter. Following the closing of the Bulgarian-Turkish frontier earlier in 1943, the British had decided that all Jews, children or adults, who succeeded in escaping to Turkey would, after a preliminary security check there, be eligible for "onward transport" to Palestine. There they would go through a further security check and, if found satisfactory, would gradually be released against the current half-yearly quotas.

It was added that this policy would also apply to Jews managing to reach other neutral countries, except that where they escaped to other territory in which they were safe, they would normally remain there (unless, as in the case of Spain, plans were made to remove them to camps in North Africa for the duration). Only in very special cases and for very special reasons, it was stated, would authority be given for their onward passage to Palestine.

A copy of this statement of British policy was promptly dispatched to Board Representative Hirschmann for such use as could be made of it to facilitate the admittance of refugees to Turkey.<sup>1/</sup>

Initial Approach Made to Turkish Government. In March, at the suggestion of the Board, Ambassador Steinhardt addressed a forthright request to the Turkish Foreign Office, asking that border and other controls be relaxed so as to permit the legal entrance of refugees from Axis-occupied areas. At the same time, an announcement to that effect "in as nearly an official manner as possible" was urged. As incentive to this proposal, the Board indicated that it would aid, financially and otherwise, in such evacuations and would arrange for the maintenance of refugees in Turkey, as well as for their removal to other places of safety.<sup>2/</sup>

Turkish authorities replied that while they were prepared to co-operate by granting an increased number of visas, they were unwilling to relax border controls or to announce that refugees would be permitted entrance. The reason advanced for this refusal was the fear that any such action would nullify Turkish efforts to prevent a flood of Axis agents from entering Turkey.<sup>3/</sup>

Red Tape Delayed Evacuations. While it was true, as the Turks pointed out in the course of the Steinhardt discussions, that Turkey had agreed to permit more refugees to pass through Turkey than had been

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- 1/ Cable No. 147 to Ankara dated February 26, 1944, comprising document 8.
  - 2/ Cable No. 146 to Ankara dated February 25, 1944, comprising document 9.
  - 3/ Dispatch No. 596 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944.



able to leave the Balkan countries, Board Representative Hirschmann's initial investigations revealed that many who had been listed for departure had been delayed for weeks because of red tape all along the line in Turkish and British procedures. Complaints were also received by the Board through private agencies to the effect that Palestine certificates granted in the Balkans could not be utilized because of the Turkish transit policy. The Board's efforts at this point therefore assumed three directions: (1) speeding up the granting of Turkish visas in the Balkan countries; (2) coordinating British and Turkish procedures; and (3) assuring adequate transportation facilities for the emigrants upon their arrival.

The aid of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic was also solicited in breaking the Bulgarian land bottleneck and, later, in pressing the Turks for permission to use a ship for evacuating refugees. Representations were made to the Soviet Ambassador to Ankara as well as through Ambassador Harriman in Moscow.<sup>1/</sup>

Evacuation of Children to Turkey. The first real sign that Turkish authorities were disposed to implement their promise of cooperation in expanding evacuation operations from the Balkans came with the issuance of instructions permitting 140 children and 10 adults to pass through Turkey from Bulgaria every 10 days. Bulgarian authorities were prevailed upon to permit the departure of the first group of these children early in March. Large numbers of child refugees from Bulgaria were subsequently evacuated through Turkey to Palestine.<sup>2/</sup>

The extremely high regard in which Ambassador Steinhardt personally was held by Turkish officials contributed greatly to the success of the Board's efforts on this and later occasions. The desire of the Turks to maintain the good will of both the people and the Government of the United States was also an important factor.

Negotiations for the evacuation of these Bulgarian children clearly demonstrated one thing: the problem of accomplishing rescues to and through Turkey involved not only enlisting the cooperation of the Turkish Government but also changing the attitude of authorities in the Axis-controlled Balkans, who had effectively prevented large-scale departures. Prompt representations were therefore made to Bulgarian and Rumanian authorities in an effort to accomplish such a change of attitude.<sup>3/</sup>

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1/ Cable No. 314 from Ankara dated February 22, 1944, and Cable No. 554 to Moscow dated March 11, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 388 from Ankara dated March 4, 1944, comprising document 10.

3/ See Rescue from Bulgaria and Rescue from Rumania.



Exploration of Shipping Facilities begun. In view of the desperate situation in the Balkans and the comparatively small number of refugees who could be evacuated to Palestine under the quota system, it soon became apparent that large-scale rescue movements by sea would also be necessary if substantial numbers of the persecuted minorities were to be rescued. Efforts were therefore begun to obtain shipping facilities to evacuate refugees from Balkan Black Sea ports. No stone was left unturned in the search for means by which evacuations could be accomplished; these efforts were pursued simultaneously in various directions.

In this search for shipping facilities the Board enlisted the assistance of the War Shipping Administration. As a result, on March 2, 1944, Myron Black, Field Director for the War Shipping Administration, was ordered from Cairo to Ankara to assist Board Representative Hirschmann; he reached Ankara on March 17.

Replacement Guarantee Obtained for "S.S. Vatan." The first ray of hope in the matter of shipping facilities came with respect to the "S.S. Vatan," a 3,700-ton cargo vessel of Turkish registry. Investigation on the part of the representative in Turkey of the Jewish Agency for Palestine had revealed the possibility that this vessel might be chartered to bring out from Rumania to Istanbul several hundred refugees, for the most part children, in dire danger of starvation and death. The International Red Cross had agreed to make efforts to obtain safe-conduct for this ship from all belligerent powers concerned. However, since the Turkish Government fully controlled all private shipping, it had refused to permit the owners to enter into a charter agreement unless the Turkish Government were assured that the vessel, if lost, would be replaced with one of comparable tonnage.<sup>1/</sup>

Within 48 hours following receipt of Board Representative Hirschmann's report on this matter, the Board succeeded in obtaining such a commitment from the War Shipping Administration,<sup>2/</sup> along with the necessary clearance from Lend Lease.<sup>3/</sup> On February 25, 1944, Board Representative Hirschmann was authorized to convey the necessary assurances to the Turkish Government.<sup>4/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 282 from Ankara dated February 18, 1944, comprising document 11.

<sup>2/</sup> Memorandum to the War Shipping Administration dated February 23, 1944, comprising document 12, and letter of the same date from the War Shipping Administration, comprising document 13.

<sup>3/</sup> Letter from the Foreign Economic Administration dated February 24, 1944 (enclosing copy of a letter of the same date from the Foreign Economic Administration to the War Shipping Administration), comprising document 14.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 144 to Ankara dated February 25, 1944, comprising document 15.

Negotiations Concerning the "S.S. Necat." Negotiations had meanwhile been initiated in Ankara for the purchase of the "S.S. Necat" at a cost of approximately \$400,000, the vessel to be donated to the Turkish Red Crescent after evacuating 5,000 Jewish children from Rumania to Palestine. It was estimated that the purchase price of this vessel would be approximately the same as the cost of transporting 5,000 children by vessel under charter. By donating the vessel to the Turkish Red Crescent, it was thought that the latter might be persuaded to carry additional refugees after the initial voyage had been completed.<sup>1/</sup>

The Board immediately discussed this proposal with representatives of the Joint Distribution Committee. Board Representative Hirschmann was in turn advised that if the "Necat" could be purchased for the amount quoted on terms satisfactory to him and Ambassador Steinhardt, the Joint Distribution Committee would supply the necessary funds.<sup>2/</sup>

The "S.S. Tari." In view of the Turkish Government's declaration that it would be impossible to withdraw more than one Turkish vessel from its small supply to be used for evacuation purposes, negotiations for the "Vatan" and the "Necat," both cargo vessels, were shortly thereafter suspended in favor of a more promising arrangement. As a result of discussions between Ambassador Steinhardt and the Turkish Foreign Office, the Turkish Government agreed to make available "as a personal courtesy" to Ambassador Steinhardt the "S.S. Tari," a 4,000-ton passenger vessel having a capacity of 1,500 persons, for the express purpose of evacuating refugees from Constanza, Rumania, to Istanbul. The "Tari" was not to be permitted to continue with this evacuation work after the completion of its first trip, however, unless by that time the United States Government had made a substitute vessel available to the Turks. Efforts were urged to effect the prompt loan of an American vessel.<sup>3/</sup>

The United States Naval Attache in Turkey, the War Shipping Administration representative, the British Naval Attache, and Board Representative Hirschmann were all in agreement that the "Tari" was highly desirable for evacuation purposes. Plans were therefore made for the vessel to sail for Constanza as soon as supplies could be loaded, charter price agreed upon, safe-conduct obtained, and insurance placed. Board Representative Hirschmann requested authority to enter into a charter party on behalf of the Board with the Turkish State Steamship Lines for the charter of the vessel for one voyage at not more than \$4,000 per day, plus specified penalties for any delays encountered. Board Representative Hirschmann also asked for confirmation

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1/ Cable No. 380 from Ankara dated March 3, 1944, comprising document 16.

2/ Cable No. 214 to Ankara dated March 17, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 455 from Ankara dated March 15, 1944, comprising document 17.

that the guarantee of replacement given by this Government to Turkey in the event of the loss of the "Vatan" would likewise apply to the "Tari." <sup>1/</sup> The Board immediately complied with both of these requests. <sup>2/</sup>

At this point the assistance of the International Red Cross was enlisted in the attempt to obtain safe-conducts for the "Tari" from all belligerents except Russia; <sup>3/</sup> safe-conduct from the latter was requested and obtained through Ambassador Harriman in Moscow. <sup>4/</sup> At the Board's request both the Swedish <sup>5/</sup> and Turkish Governments <sup>6/</sup> supported in their own names the request for safe-conduct initiated by the International Red Cross. Efforts of the Vatican were also enlisted. <sup>7/</sup> Switzerland, however, declined to lend the support requested on the ground that such action might impede efforts of the International Red Cross in that direction. The Swiss suggested that they would not refuse to consider participation in a joint step which other neutrals might decide to undertake in the matter for exclusively humanitarian motives. <sup>8/</sup>

Representatives of the Board also discussed with the War Shipping Administration the matter of this Government's making a substitute vessel available to the Turks so that the "Tari" might make additional voyages to evacuate refugees after the completion of its initial trip, and efforts were made to ascertain whether there was any small freighter available in the Mediterranean that might be chartered to the Turks. The assistance of the British Representative on the Mediterranean shipping board (MEDBO) was also enlisted by the Board in this attempt. <sup>9/</sup>

The War Shipping Administration was of the opinion, however, that the best solution would be to treat the problem as one of allocation. The Board advised Hirschmann of these developments, pointing out to him the difficulties in the way of putting a vessel in the hands of the Turks by the date of the completion of the proposed voyage of the "Tari" and suggesting that, if he could induce the Turks to accept an arrangement whereby equivalent space on an Allied vessel proceeding to the eastern Mediterranean would be made available to them, <sup>10/</sup> such an arrangement would be more feasible from a shipping standpoint. <sup>10/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 501 from Ankara dated March 21, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 250 to Ankara dated March 24, 1944, comprising document 18.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 472 from Ankara dated March 16, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 935 from Moscow dated March 20, 1944, and Cable No. 644 from Ankara dated April 11, 1944.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 571 to Stockholm dated April 3, 1944, and Cable No. 1255 from Stockholm dated April 13, 1944.

<sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 726 from Ankara dated April 22, 1944.

<sup>7/</sup> Letter to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington dated April 8, 1944, and letters from the Apostolic Delegate dated April 21 and 27, 1944.

<sup>8/</sup> Cable No. 970 to Bern dated March 23, 1944, and Cable No. 2301 from Bern dated April 13, 1944.

<sup>9/</sup> Cable No. 2516 to London dated March 31, 1944, and Cable No. 3233 from London dated April 20, 1944.

<sup>10/</sup> Cable No. 243 to Ankara dated March 23, 1944, comprising document 19.



In the course of one of Ambassador Steinhardt's discussions with the Turkish Foreign Office, inquiry was made as to what means might be devised whereby a vessel could be operated under the Turkish flag for continuous evacuations; the only proposal the Turks would advance was that this Government should donate a vessel outright to the Turkish Red Crescent. Turkey would then be willing to have the Red Crescent operate such a vessel under the Turkish flag to evacuate refugees for the duration of the war, the vessel to remain the property of the Red Crescent.<sup>1/</sup> This possibility was discussed with both the War Department and the War Shipping Administration, but military considerations prevented its realization.

Replacement-in-Kind Guarantee Demanded on "Tari." On March 27, 1944, Board Representative Hirschmann cabled that Turkish authorities had agreed on a charter price of 175,000 Turkish pounds (approximately \$97,200) for the "Tari," plus specified penalties for any delays encountered. At the same time, Hirschmann indicated, the Turks were insisting on a guarantee that the "Tari" would be replaced, in case of loss, by a passenger vessel of comparable age and tonnage, and refused to accept a guarantee of replacement covering a cargo vessel.<sup>2/</sup>

Funds were placed at Steinhardt's disposal in connection with the proposed chartering of the "Tari" <sup>3/</sup> and shortly thereafter Steinhardt was advised that authorization had finally been obtained from both the War Shipping Administration and the Foreign Economic Administration to commit this Government to the replacement of the "Tari," in the event of loss, with a passenger vessel "of similar age, size and general characteristics," as the Turkish Government had demanded.<sup>4/</sup>

Insurance on the "Tari." In the opinion of the War Shipping Administration representative in Ankara, the premium asked by local Turkish underwriters for war risk insurance on the "Tari" was outrageously high.<sup>5/</sup> After investigating all aspects of the matter, the Board concluded that, if the "Tari" were chartered, it would insure the war risk through the War Shipping Administration in Washington at a rate considerably less than that being asked in Turkey, and Board Representative Hirschmann was so advised.<sup>6/</sup>

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 458 from Ankara dated March 15, 1944, comprising document 20.
  - <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 547 from Ankara dated March 27, 1944, comprising document 21.
  - <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 324 to Ankara dated April 13, 1944, comprising document 22 ; see also Cable No. 594 from Ankara dated April 4, 1944.
  - <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 342 to Ankara dated April 17, 1944, comprising document 23 ; see also Cable No. 298 to Ankara dated April 5, 1944, and Cables No. 657 and 711 from Ankara dated April 12 and 19, 1944.
  - <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 590 from Ankara dated April 3, 1944.
  - <sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 306 to Ankara dated April 8, 1944.



Change of Destination Proposed. While the possibility of obtaining German safe-conduct for the "Tari" was being explored, word reached the Board through the International Red Cross representative in Ankara to the effect that if the projected destination of the "Tari" were changed from Haifa to Iskenderun, the chances of obtaining German safe-conduct for the ship might be considerably increased.<sup>1/</sup> Later advices from Bern suggested the same possibility--that German authorities might not oppose the projected evacuations from Rumania provided such emigration was not directed toward Palestine or other countries with Arabian interests.<sup>2/</sup> Inasmuch as such a change of destination would involve reshipping the refugees from Iskenderun, presumably on some United Nations' ship, Ambassador Steinhardt felt that such a change would be advisable only after all hope of securing a German safe-conduct to Haifa had been abandoned. Hope for such an eventuality swiftly vanished, however, with the development of a severe strain on relations at that time between Germany and Turkey, which had resulted from the discontinuance of chrome shipments from Turkey.<sup>3/</sup>

The Board therefore relayed to Ankara information received through private sources to the effect that the representative in Ankara of the Jewish Agency could probably arrange for coastal schooners to convey refugees from Iskenderun to Haifa, if the proposed change in destination were made.<sup>4/</sup>

Another alternative suggested by the Board was that the "Tari" might be routed to Istanbul, where its passengers could remain on board pending the arrangement of onward transportation by rail. This alternative was proposed following discussions with the Foreign Economic Administration, which suggested that existing railroad facilities were probably sufficient for the transportation across Turkey of many more refugees than were then being accommodated.<sup>5/</sup>

Ambassador Steinhardt later reported that the Board's offer to change the destination of the "Tari" from Haifa to a Turkish port had been unproductive of results. With respect to the availability of Turkish railroad facilities for refugees who might be evacuated to Turkey by means of the "Tari," the Ambassador stated that there were only two trains weekly from Istanbul to the Syrian frontier, and these trains required approximately 48 hours to cover the 1,000 miles on single track lines. He therefore repeated his previous assertion

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 725 from Ankara dated April 22, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 3421 from Bern dated May 29, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 795 from Ankara dated May 2, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 377 to Ankara dated April 27, 1944, comprising document 24.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 388 to Ankara dated May 3, 1944.

that the question was not so much the disposition of the Turkish Government, which continued to be cooperative, but rather the number of cars and locomotives available and particularly the condition of the locomotives.<sup>1/</sup>

Toward the end of May, when it had become increasingly clear that German safe-conduct for the "Tari" would not be forthcoming, Ambassador Steinhardt proposed to the Turkish Foreign Office that the "Tari" be allowed to sail for a Bulgarian port without German safe-conduct for the purpose of bringing refugees to Istanbul, where they would remain on board pending their gradual transportation to Palestine. The Foreign Minister agreed to take this proposal under consideration provided Bulgarian safe-conduct and permission for the "Tari" to enter a Bulgarian port were obtained.<sup>2/</sup>

In the course of an interview held some time later by Board Representative Hirschmann with the Bulgarian Minister to Turkey, it was informally learned that the Bulgarian Government was agreeable in principle to permitting the "Tari" to sail to a Bulgarian port and back to Istanbul without German safe-conduct. A communication subsequently sent to the International Red Cross representative in Ankara, through whom the original request for Bulgarian safe-conduct had been addressed, proposed that a request be submitted through the Bulgarian Red Cross to the Bulgarian Government for a formal settlement of the question.<sup>3/</sup>

To avoid having to sign a formal contract and thereby incurring a daily penalty for the idleness of the "Tari" pending advice as to whether she would be permitted to sail, the Turkish Minister was meanwhile persuaded to issue instructions permitting the vessel to be used by the State Steamship Lines for short voyages between Istanbul and Izmir or Samsun on the understanding that none of the accommodations put in for refugees were to be disturbed and that the ship would be available to the Board following the completion of each such voyage. Under the arrangements made, no such interim trip was to last over two weeks.<sup>4/</sup>

Use of "Tari" Never Obtained. Despite the long weeks during which efforts were made to arrange for the use of the "Tari" and to obtain German or Bulgarian safe-conduct, the necessary safe-conducts were never forthcoming and hope for the use of the "Tari" was eventually abandoned.

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1/ Cable No. 815 from Ankara dated May 5, 1944, comprising document 25.

2/ Cable No. 941 from Ankara dated May 23, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1371 from Ankara dated July 26, 1944, comprising document 26.

4/ Cable No. 985 from Ankara dated May 31, 1944.

Although the Board had a moral obligation to reimburse the Turkish Government for certain alterations made in the "Tari" to accommodate refugees and for part of the time the vessel was immobilized at the Board's request pending advice as to whether or not German and Bulgarian safe-conduct would be forthcoming, no claim for indemnity was advanced until nearly a year later. In view of the possibility that any modest indemnity voluntarily offered might be seized upon as an excuse for advancing an inflated claim, all approaches by the Board to Turkish authorities on the matter were held in abeyance.<sup>1/</sup>

Early in 1945 the Turkish Minister of Communications reopened the matter of the "Tari" and presented a claim to the United States Embassy in Ankara for demurrage of the "Tari" from April 9 to May 26 inclusive. The amount claimed was 117,500 Turkish pounds (approximately \$65,378). Since it was not clear whether the Foreign Office intended to press the claim, Ambassador Steinhardt took advantage of the fact that there was no longer a Board Representative in Turkey to suggest to the Foreign Office that the Turkish Embassy in Washington discuss the matter with the Board. Ambassador Steinhardt's thought was that it might thus be possible to arrange to have the claim disposed of under reverse Lend-Lease.<sup>2/</sup>

Efforts Made Simultaneously To Obtain Swedish Ship. While negotiations for a Turkish vessel received the greatest emphasis, alternative and supplemental facilities were also actively explored during the long weeks of negotiation on the "Tari."

Early in 1944 there were a considerable number of Swedish ships plying from Canada and Argentina to Greece. On February 24, 1944, at the suggestion of Board Representative Hirschmann following a discussion held with members of the Swedish Legation in Ankara,<sup>3/</sup> the Board addressed a memorandum to the Swedish Minister to the United States, asking immediate consideration on the part of Sweden to the possibility of diverting a Swedish ship from Greek relief operations for the purpose of evacuating refugees in the Black Sea area.<sup>4/</sup> The Swedish Government replied that consent of the other governments concerned with Greek relief operations would be necessary.

Originally the British objected to the diversion of any Greek relief vessel. In a letter dated April 5, 1944, the Washington representative of the Ministry of Economic Warfare advised the Board that

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1764 from Ankara dated September 19, 1944; see also Cable No. 941 from Ankara dated May 23, 1944, and Cables No. 503 and 829 to Ankara dated June 2 and September 26, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 353 from Ankara, undated, received March 18, 1945, comprising document 27.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 306 from Ankara dated February 21, 1944; see also Cable No. 299 from Ankara dated February 19, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Memorandum to the Swedish Minister to the United States dated February 24, 1944, comprising document 28.



even a small loss of tonnage in the Greek relief schedule might leave a serious gap in deliveries. Four additional ships for the Greek relief fleet were expected to leave the Baltic at an early date, however, and it was suggested that at that time the question of diverting a ship for rescue operations could be reopened.

Negotiations on the "S.S. Bardaland." In view of repeated requests from Ankara that further efforts be made to obtain a Swedish ship,<sup>1/</sup> the Board on April 14, 1944, asked Ambassador Winant to take up the matter directly with the British Government.<sup>2/</sup>

On May 4, 1944, Winant reported the receipt from the Foreign Office of a formal reply to this request, to the effect that the British had no objection to the use of a vessel known as the "S.S. Bardaland," provided the Swedish Government agreed and safe-conducts were obtained from the Soviet Union and from the German Government on behalf of itself and its allies.<sup>3/</sup>

Shortly thereafter the Board learned that the "Bardaland" was being withdrawn from Greek relief operations and was scheduled to leave Piraeus on May 18, 1944, bound for Lisbon on her way back to Sweden.<sup>4/</sup> At the Board's request, acceptance of the Swedish notice was temporarily withheld by the British.<sup>5/</sup>

Since agreements had been concluded separately with the Germans and the British calling for the return of the "Bardaland" directly to Swedish waters upon its withdrawal from Greek relief, German permission to divert the boat, in addition to German safe-conduct, was required.<sup>6/</sup> At the Board's request, the Swedish Minister in Berlin was therefore instructed to ask the Germans for permission to divert the "Bardaland" and to grant it safe-conduct. The Swedish Red Cross when approached by Board Representative Olsen agreed to act as charter party on the Board's behalf; it was felt that the chances of obtaining a German safe-conduct would thus be considerably enhanced.<sup>7/</sup>

Reassurances were obtained from the master of the "Bardaland" to the effect that the vessel was sufficiently seaworthy to make the proposed voyages. After the refitting in Istanbul which the Board proposed

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1/ Cables No. 397 and 642 from Ankara dated March 8 and April 10, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 3005 to London dated April 15, 1944, comprising document 29.

3/ Cable No. 3653 from London dated May 4, 1944, comprising document 30 ; see also Cable No. 3233 from London dated April 20, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 3857 from London dated May 12, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 3810 to London dated May 12, 1944.

6/ Cable No. 1744 from Stockholm dated May 16, 1944.

7/ Cables No. 895 and 967 to Stockholm dated May 12 and 20, 1944, comprising documents 31 and 32.



to undertake to provide needed sanitary accommodations and lifesaving and kitchen equipment, it was estimated that the vessel would be able to accommodate between 400 and 500 persons.1/

Following discussions with the War Shipping Administration, the Board also proposed, as in the case of the "Tari", that Istanbul rather than Haifa would be the final destination of the proposed voyage, since it was felt that obtaining safe-conduct from Constanza to Haifa would not only be extremely difficult but would be certain to entail delay. Moreover, alterations necessary to prepare the "Bardaland" for the short run between Constanza and Istanbul would be relatively simple and more quickly installed, particularly in comparison with the alterations that would be necessary to prepare the vessel for the long run between Constanza and Haifa. Finally, the Board was advised that many more, perhaps even twice as many, passengers could be carried on the shorter run, particularly if weather conditions were such as to permit passengers to remain on the open deck. The conclusions were relayed to Ankara.2/

German Safe-Conduct for "Bardaland" Denied. On June 5, 1944, these negotiations received a serious set-back when Board Representative Olsen cabled that the Germans had flatly refused to approve use of the "Bardaland" for evacuation purposes.3/

Reluctant to abandon this project, the Board asked Ambassador Winant to urge that acceptance of the sailing notice of the "Bardaland" be withheld by the British pending further attempts to obtain a German safe-conduct, but this cable was received too late to prevent the vessel's departure from Piraeus on June 10.4/

Germans Indifferent to Proposed Change of Destination. At the request of the Board, Minister Johnson asked the Swedish Government to renew its negotiations with the Germans on the assurance that any refugees evacuated on the "Bardaland" would be removed from Turkey to havens of refuge other than Palestine.5/ This action was taken not only because the Board clung to the hope that use of the "Bardaland" might still be arranged despite its departure from Piraeus, but also in order to ascertain the accuracy of reports attributing German refusals of safe-conduct to what was described as a settled German policy of refusing to facilitate in any way the evacuation of Jews to Palestine.6/

1/ Cable No. 1877 from Stockholm dated May 25, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 470 to Ankara dated May 25, 1944; see also Cable No. 985 from Ankara dated May 31, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 2009 from Stockholm dated June 5, 1944, comprising document 33.

4/ Cable No. 4594 to London dated June 9, 1944; see also Cable No. 4659 from London dated June 10, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 1213 to Stockholm dated June 16, 1944, comprising document 34.

6/ Cable No. 4559 from London dated June 7, 1944.

At the same time Ambassador Winant was asked to convey to the British Foreign Office the Board's conviction that if German refusal of safe-conduct for evacuations across the Black Sea was based upon their opposition to taking such refugees to Palestine, both this Government and the British should leave no stone unturned in attempting to find havens of refuge elsewhere. It was suggested that Ambassador Winant refer specifically to the possibility of taking such refugees to Cyprus, Tripolitania, and Cyrenaica.

On July 10, 1944, Minister Johnson relayed the reply of the Swedish Foreign Office to the effect that there was definitely no possibility of reopening with the Germans the matter of safe-conduct for the "Bardaland" on the basis of assurances proposed.<sup>1/</sup>

Indemnity Claimed on Bardaland. A preliminary claim of 80,000 kronor (approximately \$19,000) was later presented by the owners of the "Bardaland" through the Swedish Foreign Office as an estimate of indemnity due them for charter hire covering the three-week period during which the vessel was tied up at Piraeus.<sup>2/</sup> This claim was based on the fact that the owners of the "Bardaland," the Swedish Orient Line, had contracted to carry cargo from Spain to Sweden and that the "Bardaland" was subsequently held up, pending negotiations on the matter, from May 18, 1944, until the vessel sailed on June 10.

Three months later a final claim, amounting to \$14,860.40 was submitted.<sup>3/</sup>

Following discussions with a representative of the War Shipping Administration, who considered the claim submitted to be a reasonable indemnity under the circumstances, particularly in view of the seaman's war bonuses and the war-risk insurance involved, the Board on September 30, 1944, authorized Board Representative Olsen to effect settlement for the charges which the Board had morally incurred.<sup>4/</sup> This settlement was made on October 5, 1944.

Use of Portuguese Vessel Suggested. Since negotiations concerning the use of a Turkish or Swedish vessel had not been productive, and since other vessels were needed even if such vessels could be obtained, the Board in April of 1944 had asked Ambassador Steinhardt to reconsider the possibility that a Portuguese vessel might be obtained through the efforts of the representative in Lisbon of the Joint Distribution Committee, who had already made preliminary investigations along this line.<sup>5/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 2548 from Stockholm dated July 10, 1944, comprising document 35 ; see also Cable No. 2316 from Stockholm dated June 26, 1944, and Cable No. 1348 to Stockholm dated July 6, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2120 from Stockholm dated June 13, 1944, comprising document 36.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 3732 from Stockholm dated September 19, 1944, comprising document 37.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 1968 to Stockholm dated September 30, 1944, comprising document 38.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 296 to Ankara dated April 4, 1944.

Ambassador Steinhardt agreed that in view of the increasing number of refugees, an attempt should be made to conclude negotiations for such a vessel. 1/ The Joint Distribution Committee representative in Lisbon was so advised, and Minister Norweb and Board Representative Dexter were asked to lend all possible assistance. 2/ These efforts, however, proved fruitless.

Bulgarian Vessels Meanwhile Accomplish Evacuations. Earlier in 1944 the Board had learned through the International Red Cross that there might be a possibility of using three Bulgarian vessels, the "Bellacitta," the "Milka," and the "Maritza," in evacuating refugees to Istanbul. This information had been relayed to Ankara. 3/

Board Representative Hirschmann replied that although these possibilities were being investigated, no action was planned with respect to the "Milka" and "Maritza," since the International Red Cross representative in Bucharest had declared them to be unseaworthy. He added that efforts were being made, however, to arrange for the use of the "Bellacitta," provided German safe-conduct could be obtained. 4/ This request was subsequently made through the International Red Cross, and was supported by the Swedish Government. 5/

Representations were immediately made to the Swedish and Swiss Governments, asking that they support, in their own names, the International Red Cross request. 6/ Sweden agreed to do so. 7/ As in the case of the "Tari," however, the Swiss Government again declined. 8/ The agreement of the Soviet Foreign Office to provide safe-conduct was meanwhile obtained through Ambassador Harriman in Moscow. 9/

Evacuations by the "Milka" and "Maritza." While efforts were being made to obtain safe-conduct for the "Bellacitta," the "Milka" sailed from Constanza without such a guarantee. Through the persistent intervention of Ambassador Steinhardt and Board Representative Hirschmann

- 1/ Cable No. 626 from Ankara dated April 8, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1059 to Lisbon dated April 17, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 230 to Ankara dated March 22, 1944, comprising document 39.
- 4/ Cable No. 527 from Ankara dated March 25, 1944, comprising document 40; and Cable No. 578 from Ankara dated March 30, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 593 to Stockholm dated April 5, 1944, and Cable No. 1255 from Stockholm dated April 13, 1944.
- 6/ Cable No. 593 to Stockholm and Cable No. 1146 to Bern, both dated April 5, 1944.
- 7/ Cable No. 1255 from Stockholm dated April 13, 1944.
- 8/ Cable No. 2348 from Bern dated April 14, 1944.
- 9/ Cables No. 1164 and 1326 from Moscow dated April 4 and 17, 1944, and Cable No. 648 to Moscow dated March 21, 1944.



with the Turkish Foreign Office, supported by British representations, the 239 refugees who reached Turkey on or about March 29, 1944, aboard the "Milka" without Turkish transit visas were permitted to enter Turkey and rail transport was arranged to enable them to proceed to Palestine. British authorities in Istanbul issued the necessary emergency Palestine certificates.<sup>1/</sup>

On April 7, 1944 the "Maritza" arrived at Istanbul from Constanza, having successfully evacuated 244 Jewish refugees without safe-conduct. Again Turkish and British authorities were prevailed upon to permit these refugees to land and to furnish the necessary Palestine certificates and rail transportation to the Syrian border.<sup>2/</sup>

Voyage of the "Bellacitta." Later in April the "Bellacitta" reached Istanbul with 152 Jewish refugees on board.<sup>3/</sup> In contrast with the clandestine voyages of the two other Bulgarian vessels, the "Bellacitta" before sailing had been granted permission to enter the port of Istanbul, and all of the refugees on board had Palestine entry certificates as well as Turkish transit visas. Little difficulty was therefore experienced in accomplishing their onward passage toward Palestine.

Repeated evacuations were made by both the "Milka" and the "Maritza". The "Milka" reached Istanbul on May 1, 1944, with 272 refugees on board,<sup>4/</sup> and the "Maritza" arrived on May 17 with another 316 emigrants.<sup>5/</sup> As a result of the confidential arrangements made by Steinhardt with Turkish authorities to allow a continuation of this "illegal" movement on a restricted basis, upon Steinhardt's intervention with the Foreign Minister as each occasion arose, these refugees were likewise permitted to land and immediate transportation was provided to the Syrian border. Among the refugees comprising this second "Maritza" group were several persons who had escaped from Hungary earlier in May, who were able to name a number of Hungarian officials actively associated with the Germans in the Jewish persecutions.<sup>6/</sup>

"Maritza" Sequel. On May 31, 1944, Ambassador Steinhardt advised the Board of the receipt of a report that the "Maritza" foundered at sea while en route to Constanza on her return from Istanbul. In view of the recognized unseaworthiness of the "Maritza," as initially pointed out by the Bucharest representative of the International Red Cross, the

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 579 from Ankara dated March 30, 1944, comprising document 41; see also Cables No. 549, 564, and 573 from Ankara dated March 28, 29, and 30, 1944, respectively.
  - <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 625 from Ankara dated April 8, 1944, comprising document 42.
  - <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 746 from Ankara dated April 25, 1944, comprising document 43.
  - <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 788 from Ankara dated May 2, 1944, comprising document 44.
  - <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 907 from Ankara dated May 19, 1944, comprising document 45.
  - <sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 71 from Jerusalem dated May 25, 1944.



fact that the vessel foundered after rather than before disembarking her load of refugees was described by Steinhardt as "an act of providence."<sup>1</sup>/

The Adana Ships. Toward the end of May the Board was advised by the State Department that the British had requested this Government's views concerning appropriate conditions to be proposed to the Turkish Government in consideration for the renewal of the charters of five British cargo vessels then in Turkish service and known as the Adana ships. These vessels had originally been chartered to Turkey for the on-shipment of military supplies from Egyptian ports to Turkey, but the stoppage of military shipments to Turkey had nullified original intentions.

As one condition to the recharter of the Adana ships, the Board recommended to the State Department that Turkey be required to make available either the "Tari" or a similar vessel for repeated refugee evacuation voyages across the Black Sea to Turkey - with German safe-conduct, if possible - whenever in the opinion of the British and United States Ambassadors to Turkey such voyages became feasible. The recharter of the Adana ships would thus constitute fulfillment of any Turkish demand that a substitute passenger vessel be made available to the Turks while the "Tari" was engaged in refugee evacuation operations.

As another condition to the rechartering of the ships, the Board proposed that the Turkish Government agree to cooperate with Ambassador Steinhardt and with the British Ambassador to Turkey in making arrangements for continued evacuations across the Black Sea without German safe-conduct, to be carried on by such small boats as the "Maritza," the "Milka," and the "Bellacitta," carrying relatively small numbers of passengers. The Board proposed in this connection to arrange for the payment of a reasonable charter-hire for the use of any such Turkish vessels made available, and to assume responsibility for the maintenance and support of refugees in transit or awaiting transportation in Turkey.

Because of the necessity of using all passenger ships available for Allied military purposes it was also recommended that if the Turkish Government insisted upon a guarantee of replacement in kind in the case of loss of any Turkish vessel made available for evacuation operations, consideration should be given to using the rechartering of the Adana ships as a basis for requesting the Turkish Government to waive such a guarantee, unless the Turks were willing to make a similar guarantee to replace any of the Adana ships that might be lost.

This situation was outlined in detail to Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara.<sup>1/</sup> It was indicated for his guidance, however, that if the giving of a guarantee in kind appeared absolutely necessary in order to obtain the use of Turkish vessels, the Board would seriously consider giving such a guarantee in connection with future voyages of the "Tari" or any other Turkish vessel, because of the urgent humanitarian considerations involved. Ambassador Steinhardt was also advised that the Board's original guarantee to replace the "Tari" with a comparable passenger vessel in the event of loss on its first voyage still stood; the conditions proposed in connection with the Adana ships referred to subsequent voyages of the "Tari" and any other Turkish vessels made available for evacuation purposes.

Problems Involved in Overland Emigration. Throughout the months during which evacuations were being accomplished across the Black Sea, small numbers of refugees had been enabled to reach Turkey through underground channels. Greater numbers of persons would undoubtedly have appealed to border guards for entrance into Turkey, it was felt, had it not been for the fact that access to the Bulgarian-Turkish border was to be had only through a zone in which traffic was restricted.

Refugees arriving by land at the Turkish frontier were faced with problems that differed materially from those of the refugees who arrived in Turkish waters by boat from Rumania or Greece. Since the latter could leave Rumanian or Greek territory without entering Turkish territory, their departure onto the high seas was not subject to interference by Turkish border guards. Moreover, as experience had indicated, their applications for transit facilities could be handled on a group or individual basis while their vessels stood safely offshore. Persons seeking to cross the Turkish-Bulgarian border, however, could be prevented from leaving Bulgaria by Turkish border guards where transit visas or other entry permits were lacking. Moreover, refugees arriving by land obviously could not safely await on the Bulgarian side of the border the outcome of entry procedures.

For these reasons the Board on June 15, 1944, asked Ambassador Steinhardt to investigate the possibility of making advances arrangements with Turkey to accept refugees coming by land from Bulgaria without transit visas or other entry permits. If such arrangements could be made, subject to the speedy routing to Palestine or elsewhere of the refugees concerned, as the Board had been able to do in the case of seaborne refugees, it was felt that persons escaping over the land route would then be placed in a position no less favorable than those arriving by sea.

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 503 to Ankara dated June 2, 1944, comprising document 46.

Ambassador Steinhardt was reminded that other neutral countries adjacent to enemy-controlled areas refrained from barring the entry of refugees lacking entry permits, although such persons were sometimes subjected to technical arrest for illegal entry. If the Turkish Government were to adopt a similar procedure and instruct its border guards accordingly, there was reason to believe that additional lives could be saved, especially if the information were to reach Jews and other persecuted peoples in the Balkans that they would not be turned back at the border.<sup>1/</sup>

Ambassador Steinhardt in turn indicated his feeling that the possibility of converting Turkey to any such formal agreement was extremely remote. Since May, it was learned, Turkish border guards had been under informal instructions not to turn back Jewish refugees but to detain them on the Turkish side of the frontier pending instructions. These instructions were given after written assurances had been extended by the British Ambassador that Palestine certificates would be issued immediately, on application, to all Jewish refugees reaching Turkey.

Ambassador Steinhardt feared that if the United States Embassy should attempt to convert the benevolent attitude of the Turkish authorities into an arrangement of a more formal character, the Turks might conclude that plans were afoot to carry on evacuations on such a scale as to severely tax Turkish facilities. He therefore felt that, at least for the time being, it would be preferable to try to hold the Turks to strict compliance with the informal assurances that had already been given, rather than risk their being withdrawn by pressing for a more formal agreement.<sup>2/</sup>

Investigations on the part of Board Representative Hirschmann later verified the fact that certain refugees who reached the Turkish border during May and early June of 1944 had actually been permitted to enter Turkey, after being detained and investigated by the police. Information obtained from other sources, however, indicated that later in June other persons tried unsuccessfully to cross the border. Despite efforts made in Ankara to have affirmative instructions sent to the border authorities, these refugees were said to have been sent back from the frontier.<sup>3/</sup>

Joint Representations Made to Turkish Foreign Office. In view of such reports as these and in view of the formal assurance that had been given by the British concerning the availability of Palestine certificates, joint representations were therefore made in July 1944 by

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 534 to Ankara dated June 15, 1944; see also Cable No. 499 to Ankara dated June 2, 1944, and Cable No. 1010 from Ankara dated June 5, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1104 from Ankara dated June 19, 1944, comprising document 47.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1286 from Ankara dated July 15, 1944.

representatives of both the United States and the British Embassies toward persuading the Turkish Government to instruct Turkish consuls in Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary to issue without prior reference to Ankara individual or collective Turkish transit visas to any Jewish refugees who might apply, and also to instruct the authorities at Turkish frontier posts to permit Jewish refugees to enter Turkey and proceed to Istanbul, irrespective of the means by which they arrived at the frontier, and even though they arrived without Turkish visas.<sup>1/</sup>

United States Visas Made Available. While these joint proposals were under consideration by the Turkish Foreign Office, discussions had been going on between the Board and the State Department, as a result of which, on July 28, 1944, instructions were dispatched to the United States Consulate in Istanbul authorizing (1) the issuance of United States visas for which advisory approval had been granted subsequent to July 1, 1941, and (2) the renewal of visas actually issued since that date, but which had expired. These instructions applied to visa applicants in Axis territory and were subsequently amended to include certain close relatives of United States citizens or of aliens legally admitted into the United States.<sup>2/</sup> Developments in the Balkans, however, precluded any substantial activity to implement the intent of the instructions.

Understanding Reached with Turkish Foreign Office. In August, 1944, in order to consolidate in an over-all agreement various understandings that had been reached with the Foreign Office, it was finally agreed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would issue transit visas to any and all Jews applying for them at the Turkish Consulate in Budapest provided they were in possession of any one of the following documents: (1) a United States immigration visa issued on or after July 1, 1941; (2) a letter from the Jewish Agency in Istanbul certifying that the holder had been granted a Palestine certificate; (3) a certificate issued by the Jewish Agency representative in Budapest stating that the bearer was Jewish; or (4) an appropriate certificate issued by the Swiss Legation or an endorsement on a child's passport under the "5,000" scheme.<sup>3/</sup>

Similar instructions were sent to the Turkish Consulates in Constanza and Burgas, authorizing them to issue up to 400 visas between them every 10 days to applicants in possession of such documents. At first, the Turkish Foreign Office desired to limit entry into Turkey from Rumania and Bulgaria to persons arriving by ship, but this was subsequently amended to include rail transportation until such time as

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1287 from Ankara dated July 15, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: United States Visas.

<sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.



it could be demonstrated that voyages by sea could be made with some degree of regularity. The Foreign Office also undertook to request the Ministry of the Interior to admit into Turkey without delay and without reference to Ankara any persons arriving at Turkey's land borders without Turkish visas, provided such persons were in possession of one of the four types of documents specified.1/

Evacuations by Sea Temporarily Halted. During May and June 1944 there had been a virtual cessation of refugee traffic from Constanza to Istanbul. After the "Maritza" went down, Bulgarian authorities, fearing the loss of additional small ships, withdrew permission releasing ships for refugee purposes. In view of the fact that the "Milka" had been indefinitely detained by German authorities in Burgas and it had become extremely doubtful that either German or Bulgarian safe-conduct would be obtained for the "Tari," the Turkish Foreign Office was approached with a view to inducing Turkish authorities to authorize the use of a number of Turkish vessels to transport refugees from Balkan ports to Istanbul.2/

Following Board Representative Hirschmann's return to Turkey later in June, and the sending of Herbert Katzki to assist Hirschmann, 3/ these efforts were increased.

Rescue Work Centralized under Board Representatives. As rescue activities in Turkey proceeded, it became apparent that the efforts of an increasing number of representatives of various rescue and relief agencies had given rise to confusion, duplication of efforts, and an unfavorable reaction in the Turkish Foreign Office. Moreover, there were indications that competitive bidding on the part of the various organizations was tending to increase the cost of rescue operations without, of course, increasing the limited number of vessels available for such purposes.

At the initiative of Ambassador Steinhardt a conference was therefore held in Ankara by representatives of various interested rescue and relief organizations, as a result of which an over-all coordinating committee was established to include all effective agencies then represented in Turkey. Direction of this committee was assumed by Board Representative Hirschmann and his assistant, Herbert Katzki, and efforts were subsequently made to insure that each private refugee organization made the most effective contribution to the Board's over-all program.4/

1/ Dispatch No. 808 from Ankara dated October 4, 1944, comprising a summary report from Board Representative Hirschmann.

2/ Cable No. 1066 from Ankara dated June 14, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 512 and 522 to Ankara dated June 6 and 10, 1944; see also Cable No. 888 from Ankara dated May 17, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 1217 from Ankara dated July 5, 1944, comprising document 48 see also Cables No. 991 and 1018 from Ankara dated June 1 and June 5, 1944, and Cable No. 535 to Ankara dated June 15, 1944.

A small working committee made up of leading representatives of the most active organizations was also established to deal with day-to-day problems. This committee likewise operated under the Board's representatives and succeeded in concentrating and defining the activities of the various agencies. At the same time it served as the liaison with the Turkish Foreign Office in refugee matters.

Differences between Private Agencies over Rumanian Operations.

Shortly thereafter certain operational conflicts were settled between representatives of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis with respect to the insistent demand of the latter that a larger representation of Agudath Israel and Vaad Hahatzala refugees in Rumania be included in these contemplated voyages of ships from Constanza to Istanbul. Board Representative Hirschmann took the position that the Board would not assume jurisdiction over the age, type, origin, or organizational affiliation of the refugees chosen to proceed on ships from the Balkan countries to Istanbul and thence to Palestine. At the same time, Board Representative Hirschmann advised the Vaad Hahatzala representative that no objection would be raised to his taking independent steps to secure ships to travel from Constanza to Istanbul carrying the refugees in whom his organization was exclusively interested.<sup>1/</sup>

Large-Scale Evacuations from Balkans Proposed. During the summer of 1944 various private organizations in this country received appeals for substantial amounts of money to be used in efforts to stop deportations and to permit departures for safer countries. According to one such appeal, there was the possibility that an additional 8,000 persons could be rescued from the Balkans at a cost of from two to three million dollars. The Joint Distribution Committee, to whom the appeal was addressed, indicated its willingness to underwrite these operations. Details of the proposal were then cabled to Ambassador Steinhardt and Board Representative Hirschmann, and their recommendations in the matter solicited.<sup>2/</sup>

Since the required funds were to be supplied partly in Swiss francs and partly in Turkish pounds, discussions were held with the Swiss Minister in Washington, through whom special arrangements were made to obtain the necessary Swiss currency on condition that the funds made available would be used solely for humanitarian purposes.

Another appeal indicated that some 2,600 persons from the Balkans might be evacuated if the operations proposed could be underwritten to the extent of \$800,000. In these evacuations it was proposed that

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1322 from Ankara dated July 20, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 588 to Ankara dated June 30, 1944.

ships similar to the "Milka" and "Maritza" be used. The Joint Distribution Committee agreed to provide up to \$800,000 for the program contemplated. The recommendations of Ambassador Steinhardt and Board Representative Hirschmann were also solicited in this connection.<sup>1/</sup> The funds for these two evacuation projects were sent by the Joint Distribution Committee through its representative in Switzerland.<sup>2/</sup>

Since the operation of evacuation ships without safe-conduct appeared to be the only means of rescuing appreciable numbers of refugees in the Balkan area, the Board formally indicated to the Joint Distribution Committee and to the Jewish Agency, the other organization concerned, its willingness to share the moral responsibility involved in the proposed projects. At the same time Board Representative Hirschmann was asked to advise the Soviet Government, through its Ambassador at Ankara, of the contemplated operations. Although a Russian safe-conduct did not seem to be essential since the evacuation vessels were not enemy ships, Board Representative Hirschmann was authorized to get in touch with Ambassador Harriman in Moscow directly, in the event that he considered a formal Russian safe-conduct desirable.<sup>3/</sup>

Arrangements were subsequently made for four Turkish ships and one Greek ship to transport refugees from Constanza to Istanbul. These ships were the "Kazbek," the "Mefkura," the "Bulbul," the "Marina," and the Greek "Myrna." There was reason to hope that should these vessels successfully complete their trips, repeated evacuations would be possible by means of these or similar vessels.<sup>4/</sup>

In the course of a meeting held by Board Representative Hirschmann with Rumanian Minister Cretzianu a short time later, Cretzianu agreed to ask his Government to facilitate by all possible means the departure of these vessels from Constanza.<sup>5/</sup>

Evacuations Accomplished by Means of the "Kazbek." The "Kazbek" subsequently reached Istanbul on July 8, 1944. Among the 759 refugees from Rumania were 265 children, most of whom came originally from Transnistria, and a number of Hungarians and Poles who had found temporary refuge in Rumania.<sup>6/</sup> It was Board Representative Hirschmann's belief that the successful completion of the voyage of the "Kazbek"

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1/ Cable No. 584 to Ankara dated June 29, 1944; see also Cables No. 2183 and 2184 to Bern dated June 27, 1944.

2/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

3/ Cable No. 631 to Ankara dated July 12, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 1218 from Ankara dated July 5, 1944.

5/ See Rescue from Rumania.

6/ Cable No. 1250 from Ankara dated July 11, 1944, comprising document 49.

indicated that the Rumanian authorities had undergone a change of heart in their attitude toward the Jewish people in Rumania. Reports received indicated that they were being more helpful in furthering the emigration of Jews from Rumania via Turkey to Palestine.<sup>1/</sup>

Arrival of the "Marina." Another of the vessels chartered by the Jewish Agency subsequently reached Istanbul after an uneventful voyage, having evacuated more than 300 persons. The group included 177 children, most of whom were orphans from Transnistria.<sup>2/</sup>

Cooperation of Turkish Foreign Office. During the period from April 1944, when the "Milka" made its first voyage, until August 1944, a total of some 4,000 persons had been evacuated by sea from Rumania to Istanbul. As a result of strong representations made by Ambassador Steinhardt and Board Representative Hirschmann in each instance, Turkish visas were issued to the emigrants upon their arrival, thereby enabling them to proceed to Palestine. Part of the arrangement made by Steinhardt with the Turkish Ministry of Communications included the provision of special trains to transport these refugees from Istanbul to the Syrian border.

Two other vessels chartered by the Jewish Agency, however, were not as fortunate as the "Kazbek" and the "Marina."

Sinking of the "Mefkura." On August 7, 1944, Board Representative Hirschmann cabled that the "Mefkura" had been torpedoed and sunk near the Turkish port of Igneado. The five lone survivors of 295 passengers carried by the vessel reported that shortly after midnight on August 5 the "Mefkura" was approached by three surface craft similar in appearance to German boats seen in the harbor at Constanza. The three boats opened fire on the "Mefkura" with cannon and machine guns. A large number of the passengers were wounded on the ship by gun fire; others were caught in the flames or injured by flying debris following the explosion of the vessel's machinery room. Machine guns continued firing upon many of the passengers after they had donned life preservers and jumped overboard.

The "Bulbul," later approached by the armed boats, shut down its engines and was left unharmed. The "Bulbul" stood by until daylight, picked up survivors of the "Mefkura," and continued its voyage to the entrance of the Bosphorus. Stormy seas prevented the "Bulbul's" entrance however, and it was forced to turn back to Igneada for safe anchorage.

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1285 from Ankara dated July 15, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1471 from Ankara dated August 10, 1944, comprising document 50.



In order to avoid further exposure of these refugees to the dangers lurking in the Black Sea, means were provided for their over-land removal from Igneada to Istanbul. These operations, which included laboriously transporting the women and children over the mountains from Igneada by means of ox-carts, with the men having to walk that 40-mile stretch, were conducted by the Turkish Red Crescent and were underwritten by the Board. The "Bulbul's" 395 passengers and those from the ill-fated "Mefkura" eventually proceeded from Istanbul to Palestine by rail.<sup>1/</sup>

Changes in Political Scene. Toward the end of July, 1944 the Turkish Government discontinued the general movement of Turkish ships in the Aegean and Black Seas.<sup>2/</sup> The sinking of the "Mefkura" and the Turkish-German diplomatic break added to the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

In response to Board Representative Hirschmann's request for the Board's views regarding the future use of Bulgarian or any other vessels operating without German safe-conduct, the Board indicated that it would support any decision made by him after consultation with the Embassy and the private organizations concerned. The Board also indicated that this position was based on the assumption that through the appropriate private organizations the refugees themselves had been fully informed of the risks involved in embarking on vessels lacking safe-conducts as compared with the danger of remaining at what Ambassador Steinhardt described as "the tender mercies of the Nazis."<sup>3/</sup>

Rumanian and Bulgarian Concessions Obtained. On August 23, 1944, Hirschmann reported that the Rumanian Government had agreed to provide transit facilities for refugees from Hungary,<sup>4/</sup> and that continued efforts were being made to secure a similar concession from the Bulgarian Government.<sup>5/</sup> The latter had agreed to permit the "Vita" and the "Pirin" to be used to transport refugees from Burgas to Istanbul. It was hoped that one of these ships could make a trip every 10 days carrying refugees to whom transit visas had been granted by Turkish consuls. At the United States Embassy's request Turkish authorities agreed to facilitate the movement of the refugees by rail in the event of a delay in inaugurating operation of the boats.

Despite the broad scope of these new arrangements, which provided a basis for substantial rescue operations through Turkey, there were indications that the movement of refugees might still be delayed. One

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1493 from Ankara dated August 15, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1395 from Ankara dated July 31, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 694 from Ankara dated August 10, 1944; see also Cable No. 1445 from Ankara dated August 7, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> See Rescue from Hungary.

<sup>5/</sup> See Rescue from Bulgaria.

such indication came in the form of a report from the International Red Cross, which confirmed to the United States Embassy in Ankara that despite their possession of all the requisite visas, the emigration of one large group of persons in Hungary was being held up by lack of permission from the Germans to depart.<sup>1/</sup>

Following the Rumanian and Bulgarian declarations of war on Germany, evacuations from Hungary by way of the Balkans and Turkey came to a standstill.

Katzki Named Board Representative. Following the completion of Ira Hirschmann's second mission and his return to the United States in October, 1944, Herbert Katzki was named Board Representative in Turkey.<sup>2/</sup>

Toward the end of October the Turkish "Salahattin" successfully evacuated 547 passengers from Rumania to Istanbul, railroad transportation to the Syrian border being provided by the Turks in line with Ambassador Steinhardt's general agreement. Most of these refugees were persons who had previously escaped from Hungary and who had been in Rumania.<sup>3/</sup>

The Turkish "Toros," traveling under Rumanian safe-conduct, reached Istanbul on December 5, 1944, carrying more than 900 emigrants from Rumania. This group included a large number of children repatriated from Transnistria to Rumania and many refugees from Hungary. As in previous cases, there were also a number of refugees who had been forced laborers in the Bor Mines in Yugoslavia prior to their liberation.<sup>4/</sup>

Publicity Recommended on Turkish Cooperation. When the Board first began operating in Turkey, both Ambassador Steinhardt and Board Representative Hirschmann urgently recommended, and the Board agreed, that no publicity would be given to possible Turkish cooperation since any such publicity might cause the Turkish Government to feel that it had already sufficiently placated American public opinion and thereafter lose interest in continuing cooperation.<sup>5/</sup> Later, when Ambassador Steinhardt first obtained the agreement of the Turkish Foreign Office to provide transportation to the Syrian border for the hundreds of refugees who had begun to arrive "illegally" by sea, he repeated his recommendation that no public appreciation for the Foreign

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1546 from Ankara dated August 23, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 938 to Ankara dated October 25, 1944; see also Cable No. 2075 from Ankara dated October 28, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 2079 from Ankara dated October 30, 1944, comprising document 51.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 2320 from Ankara dated December 7, 1944, comprising document 52.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 345 from Ankara dated February 26, 1944, and Cable No. 198 to Ankara dated March 13, 1944.

Minister's action be expressed since such publicity at that time might embarrass Turkish relations with Arab countries and might be used against the Foreign Minister by certain political opponents.1/

By December of 1944, however, immediately before his transfer from Ankara to a new diplomatic post, Ambassador Steinhardt felt that, since the desire of the Turkish Government to be helpful in the rescue of refugees had been repeatedly and substantially demonstrated, the time had come for publicizing in the United States the manner in which Turkey had cooperated in the movement of refugees from the Balkans to Palestine.2/

By that time the Board had given publicity to the cooperation obtained in Turkey, in the course of press conferences, speeches by Executive Director Pehle, and otherwise.

British Cease Issuing Emergency Certificates. Following the liberation of the Balkans by Soviet armies, the British abruptly ceased issuing Palestine certificates to refugees reaching Istanbul on the ground that an emergency situation no longer existed. British authorities in the countries in which prospective emigrants resided, however, were understood to have received instructions to resume the issuance of visas for Palestine, under the limitation of the White Paper, in the same manner with which they had been granted in pre-war days.

Two contingents of emigrants, numbering 626 persons, who left Rumania without permission to depart from Soviet-controlled territory but with the expectation of being permitted to proceed to Palestine in accordance with the agreement then in force, were subsequently held up in Bulgaria. Not until efforts were made to obtain the necessary documents from the British passport control office in Istanbul to enable the emigrants to proceed to Palestine was it learned that the British Embassy in Ankara had notified the Turkish Foreign Office in writing on December 20, 1944, that the previous general agreement should be regarded as terminated.

This cancellation was made without notice to Ambassador Steinhardt, Board Representative Katzki, the British passport control office in Istanbul, or to the private organization concerned. When advised of the arrival of the first of these refugees at the Turkish frontier, the British Embassy indicated that its decision in the matter would have to stand.3/ Prompt intervention on the

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1/ Cable No. 907 from Ankara dated May 19, 1944 comprising document 45.

2/ Cable No. 2348 from Ankara dated December 12, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 2402 and 2438 from Ankara dated December 22 and 31, 1944.

part of Ambassador Steinhardt with both the British and Soviet Ambassadors, however, eventually resulted in the appropriate visas permission for the onward movement of the emigrants being granted, and both groups were thereby enabled to proceed to Palestine.1/

According to a year-end analysis of rescue operations to and through Turkey a total 6,527 refugees had been enabled to pass through Turkey en route to Palestine during 1944. This number was exclusive of unrecorded clandestine escapes, nor did it include 282 persons from Holland who were exchanged for German nationals in July under the auspices of the Turkish Red Crescent, aided by the Jewish Agency.2/ The great majority of these refugees came from Rumania; many were of Polish, Slovakian, Ruthenian, and Hungarian origin who had succeeded in escaping to Rumania. Of the 10 groups that had arrived by sea from Constanza, five had been by means of Bulgarian vessels and five by means of vessels of Turkish registry.3/

In view of the inadequate communication channels and sources of information about conditions in the Balkan countries following their liberation by Soviet armies, and in view of the fact that Soviet authorities had refused permission for Board Representative Katzki to visit Rumania or Bulgaria for the purpose of evaluating at first hand both relief needs and the possibilities of effecting further rescues from Hungary and other enemy-held territory,4/ it appeared that the maintenance of a Board office in Turkey was no longer warranted. Board Representative Katzki therefore returned to Washington in February 1945 for consultation.

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- 1/ Cable No. 46 from Ankara dated January 9, 1945.  
2/ Dispatch No. 808 from Ankara dated October 4, 1944.  
3/ Cable No. 130 from Ankara dated January 25, 1945.  
4/ See Rescue from Rumania.



## II B. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH SWITZERLAND

The very nature of the work for which the War Refugee Board was established required that Switzerland figure prominently in the Board's plans. Four factors dictated the vital importance of Switzerland to the success of the Board's rescue and relief programs: Geographically, it was a neutral island in the heart of enemy and enemy-occupied territory, for much of which it was the only accessible neutral ground, and as such offered opportunities for making reliable underground contacts; politically, it was the power protecting the interests of many belligerent governments, and its offices in that capacity were essential for the wide representations which were to be made; traditionally, it played an international humanitarian role, in keeping with which it had already given asylum to many racial and political refugees and could be expected to maintain its interest in the fate of victims of Nazi persecution and oppression; and financially, it constituted the most practical channel for the large sums of money which would be necessary to support rescue and relief measures.

Moreover, the value of Switzerland as a center for rescue and relief operations was further enhanced by the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross had its headquarters there. It was also the source or the relay point for a majority of the numerous reports and statistics concerning conditions in and the detainee population of concentration camps, information which was to become invaluable in planning and evaluating relief measures.

Shortly after the Board's establishment in January 1944, Switzerland became the base for extensive rescue and relief activities in all of the surrounding occupied territories, and as the war with Germany progressed towards its conclusion the operations conducted by the Board from Switzerland became increasingly important. The approaches to rescue and relief problems were many and varied. Early measures were directed to facilitating evacuations of refugees from enemy areas, with guarantees to the Swiss Government regarding the removal of refugees after the war and their maintenance while in Switzerland, and to obtaining the release and/or protection of certain categories of persons detained by the Nazis.<sup>1/</sup> The help of resistance groups and underground workers was

<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports, Exchange, and United States Visas.

enlisted in clandestine operations in enemy-controlled areas and in securing valuable information concerning rescue needs and possibilities in such areas, and measures seeking the release of refugees were augmented by utilization of channels to accessible Nazi officials.<sup>1/</sup> With the rising tempo of military developments, efforts to effect the physical evacuation of refugees from occupied areas and to supply relief to concentration camp inmates were expanded and intensified.<sup>2/</sup>

Through the Board's assistance, large sums of money were remitted regularly to Switzerland from this country by interested private agencies. The Board's operations and the programs which it helped to develop resulted in the saving of thousands of refugees by enabling them to reach safety in Switzerland or by sustaining their lives in concealment or in camps and prisons.

Initial Approach to Swiss Government Made. In January 1944, immediately following the creation of the Board, Minister Harrison approached the Swiss Government for the purpose of explaining the policy set forth in the Executive Order creating the Board and to solicit any recommendations the Swiss Government might be able to offer as to what this Government might do to effect the immediate rescue and relief of victims of Axis oppression.<sup>3/</sup>

Special Representative Named. In February 1944, to facilitate the work of the Board, Roswell D. McClelland, a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, was named Special Representative of the Board for Switzerland and Special Attaché on war refugee matters to the United States Legation in Bern.<sup>4/</sup>

Following later discussions between the Executive Director of the Board and the Swiss Minister in Washington, Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were asked to initiate an informal discussion of the refugee problem with the Swiss Foreign Office, with suggested emphasis on the contribution Switzerland had made and was making to the problem. It was indicated that the Board would appreciate receiving from the Swiss Government, informally and confidentially, any and all suggestions for possible

<sup>1/</sup> See Special Negotiations.

<sup>2/</sup> See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 251 to Bern dated January 25, 1944; the instructions cabled Minister Harrison were similar to those sent Ambassador Winant in London, which appear as document 5. See also Cable No. 624 from Bern dated January 31, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 659 to Bern dated February 26, 1944; the instructions cabled Representative McClelland were similar to those sent Representative Hirschmann, which appear as document 3. See also Cables No. 1787 and 1254 from Bern dated March 8 and 22, 1943, and Cable No. 7438 to Bern dated April 25, 1944.

courses of action. Since it was felt that certain phases of the problem could best be handled by informal arrangement with the Swiss Government rather than by formal requests to make demands on the German Government, the Board authorized Minister Harrison and Representative McClelland to discuss particular problems with the Swiss Government on an informal basis where such action would be helpful, before making formal requests.1/

Preliminary Reports Received. In February 1944, a preliminary report was received from Minister Harrison in Bern concerning the refugee situation in Switzerland and the willingness of Swiss federal authorities to be of help on the problem. More than 70,000 refugees had already been admitted to Switzerland, it was estimated, and more were arriving at the rate of 90 to 100 per day.2/ On March 4, 1944, Minister Harrison transmitted to the Board the text of a report from the Swiss Government itself on the refugee problem in that country, indicating that it was Switzerland's policy to admit, so far as circumstances permitted, political refugees, expectant mothers, aged persons with their wives or husbands, infants and very young children, persons with close relatives in Switzerland, women who had lost Swiss nationality through marriage, and persons who were ill. Although the Swiss took the position that they could not formally associate themselves with the Board's program, since it was that of a belligerent government, the Foreign Office indicated that Switzerland's humanitarian efforts in this direction would be continued independently and to as substantial an extent as possible.3/ Toward this end the Swiss Department of Justice and Police subsequently established an advisory committee of Swiss citizens interested in refugee problems to consider proposals received by the Swiss Government on refugee matters,4/ but this group never effectively coordinated or implemented the work of the various agencies in Switzerland handling refugee matters.5/

Discrimination at Swiss Border Alleged. A report somewhat in conflict with those forwarded from Bern in February 1944 was received by the Board early in March of that year from the representative in Switzerland of the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee. This report asserted that Switzerland was limiting asylum to three categories of persons: elderly men, women with minor children, and those having relatives in Switzerland. Younger men who were

1/ Cable No. 2221 to Bern dated June 30, 1944; see also Cable No. 8272 from Bern dated December 21, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 941 from Bern dated February 15, 1944, comprising document 53.

3/ Cables No. 1303 and 1304 from Bern dated March 4, 1944, the latter comprising document 54.

4/ Cable No. 1130 from Bern dated February 24, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 6038 from Bern dated September 13, 1944.



endeavoring to escape deportation to Poland from Belgium, France, and Holland and who had made their way to the Swiss frontier had allegedly been prohibited entry and had even been refused permission to telephone to their acquaintances in the hope of initiating intervention in their behalf.1/

Since the important question appeared to be the interpretation Swiss authorities placed on the term "political refugees," Minister Harrison was asked to approach appropriate officials of the Swiss Government with a view to ascertaining the extent to which Swiss authorities — including the Swiss Foreign Police Department, border guards, and cantonal police — considered the following to be political refugees: stateless Jews, Jewish nationals of United Nations then occupied by the Germans, Jewish nationals of Germany and her satellites, and nationals generally of United Nations then occupied by the Germans. At the same time, Minister Harrison was urged to make clear to the Swiss Government the Board's belief that persons in all four of these categories should be considered political refugees and should, after appropriate security checks, be afforded temporary refuge without regard to age, sex, or the existence of close relatives in Switzerland.2/

Relief through the Blockade. Since one of the most important problems relative to refugees in Switzerland was that of providing food and clothing, the Board, shortly after it was set up, began pressing for adequate assurances to be made to the Swiss that larger trans-blockade quotas of these supplies would be allocated to Switzerland in proportion to the increase in the number of refugees received by her.3/

1/ Cable No. 1321 from Bern dated March 4, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 983 to Bern dated March 24, 1944, comprising document 55. "In reply to much sharp criticism levelled by various organizations and persons against the Swiss police on the subject of turning fugitives back at the frontier it must in all fairness be pointed out that the equitable application of border control measures at a time when thousands of individuals, many not at all in danger of their lives and often undesirables, were attempting to enter Switzerland illegally, was extraordinarily difficult. Inevitably, isolated refugees were turned back who should perhaps have been admitted. The overall percentage of those granted asylum, however, in relation to the number who presented themselves at the frontiers was over ninety-five according to the actual statistical records." — Report on the Activities of the War Refugee Board through its Representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, enclosed with letter from Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated August 2, 1945.

3/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.



Licensing Problems Involved in Rescue Operations. One of the first private organizations to present this Government with a proposal for the rescue and relief of persons in enemy and occupied territories was the World Jewish Congress. Before the creation of the Board and in response to a report that Rumania could be prevailed upon to release some 70,000 Jews, the Treasury Department in the summer of 1943 had reviewed its long-standing position of not licensing the financing of rescue and relief operations in Europe.<sup>1/</sup> The Treasury decided that the license should be issued to the World Jewish Congress. It was not issued, however, until more than five months after the proposal was presented,<sup>2/</sup> the delay having been due in part to objections raised by the British. Ambassador Winant had reported in this connection that, while the British Ministry of Economic Warfare was prepared to agree in principle with the financial arrangements proposed by the Treasury, the British Foreign Office saw grave objections because of the difficulties they perceived in the evacuation of "any considerable number of Jews" from enemy-occupied territory, in view of the problems of shipping and "finding accommodations in the countries of the Near East."<sup>3/</sup>

In December of 1943, after detailed memoranda on the delays encountered had been presented by the Treasury to the State Department and following conferences on the matter, the State Department itself authorized the World Jewish Congress to carry on evacuation operations in Rumania and France, and an initial remittance was made.<sup>4/</sup> In all, World Jewish Congress remittances to Switzerland totaling \$225,000 were authorized by the Treasury during 1944 and early 1945 for rescue and relief operations in enemy territory, as well as some \$12,000 for relief of Italian refugees in Switzerland.

Licenses were subsequently issued by the Treasury, with the approval of the State Department and without clearance from the British, to two other private organizations for the purpose of carrying on rescue and relief programs in enemy territory. These organizations were the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee<sup>5/</sup> and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada.<sup>6/</sup>

The license issued to the Union of Orthodox Rabbis went further than the two previous ones (subsequently amended to conform

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1889 to Bern dated August 6, 1943.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 3657 from Bern dated June 14, 1943.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 8717 from London dated December 15, 1943.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 3168 to Bern dated December 18, 1943; see also Cable No. 242 to London dated January 10, 1944.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 39 to Bern dated January 5, 1944; see also Cable No. 1906 to Bern dated June 3, 1944.

<sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 229 to Bern dated January 22, 1944.

with the license granted the Union of Orthodox Rabbis); it provided for the acquisition, if necessary, of local funds, goods, and services from persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory against payment in free exchange or free currency notes. This represented a change in the basic policy of the Treasury with respect to trading-with-the-enemy problems, but was limited to cases such as these, involving the saving of lives, and reflected the conviction that any danger involved in permitting the enemy to acquire relatively insubstantial quantities of foreign exchange was far outweighed by the humanitarian considerations involved. With this departure from a policy which had previously been strictly adhered to, the groundwork was laid for the financial transactions which were to become such a vital part of the Board's rescue programs.

Following the creation of the Board, various other rescue and relief projects were proposed to the Board by these and other interested agencies. The Board, in turn, after conferences with representatives of the organizations concerned and after due consideration of the operations proposed, made recommendations to the Treasury for the issuance of still other basic licenses and of the more specific remittance licenses necessary in connection with the sending of funds for the operations proposed.<sup>1/</sup>

Major Role Played by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. In the course of the Board's operations, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was authorized to remit to Switzerland a total of more than \$14,000,000 for a variety of relief and evacuation projects, most of them using Switzerland as a base of operations but some of which, involving the Balkans, were undertaken from Turkey.<sup>2/</sup>

Reports from Joint Distribution Committee representatives abroad and from other sources indicated that these funds were instrumental in saving the lives of many thousands of persons of the Jewish faith and in providing relief for even greater numbers remaining in enemy territory. The amounts remitted by the Joint Distribution Committee were used to finance, among other operations, the flight of Hungarian Jewish refugees to Rumania and Slovakia, the transportation of refugees from Rumania to Palestine, the sending of relief supplies into occupied areas such as Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, the sending of food parcels to persons in various concentration camps, and for clandestine rescues and the maintenance and protection of endangered persons in occupied countries, notably France and, to a lesser extent, Slovakia.<sup>3/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: Other United States Agencies for details concerning cooperation with the Treasury Department.

<sup>2/</sup> See Rescue to and through Turkey.

<sup>3/</sup> See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee); see also Special Negotiations and Rescue to and through Italy.

The expenditure of other substantial amounts provided by the Joint Distribution Committee was under the immediate direction of the Board's representative in Bern.1/

Funds were likewise repeatedly remitted by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, a total of \$800,000 having been authorized to be sent to their agents in Switzerland.

Other Private Organizations Active. A number of other private welfare agencies were subsequently licensed to carry on evacuation operations from Switzerland and the necessary communication with persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory.

In February 1944 the Jewish Labor Committee was authorized to engage in the relief and evacuation of Jews from Poland to Hungary and from France to Switzerland.2/ A total of \$55,000 was authorized to be remitted by this organization. One group with which these operations were concerned consisted of anti-Nazi labor and political refugees then in Switzerland or being evacuated to that country, who were in desperate need of food, clothing, and housing. Other Jewish Labor Committee funds transmitted to Switzerland were used to accomplish the removal of several hundred children from especially dangerous areas 3/ and for the relief of certain Polish nationals in Shanghai.

Through urgent Red Cross messages, a welfare group known as Selfhelp of Emigrés from Central Europe learned that a great many refugees from Hitlerism then in France were in desperate need of money, partly in order to buy food, partly to facilitate their liberation from camps, but largely, it was inferred, to enable them to make the dangerous trip to such neutral countries as Switzerland and Spain. In early February 1944 this organization applied for a license to permit the transfer of funds to its representative in Geneva to be used for the rescue of these refugees in France and other enemy-occupied countries — including Italy, Belgium, and Holland — and for their relief pending evacuation. Remittances totaling \$40,000 were subsequently authorized.4/

Treasury licenses were also issued upon the Board's recommendation to the American Christian Committee for Refugees for the rescue and relief of persons in enemy territory, notably in France. Remittances aggregating \$149,500 were authorized for these operations.5/

1/ For accounts of accomplishments supported by these funds, see especially Record of Expenditures from War Refugee Board Discretionary Funds dated November 27, 1944, comprising document 56, and Record of Expenditures dated June 2, 1945 (and accompanying letter from Representative McClelland in Bern dated May 30, 1945), comprising document 57.

2/ Cable No. 584 to Bern dated February 21, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 3657 from Bern dated June 8, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 782 to Bern dated March 9, 1944; see also Cable No. 2945 to Bern dated August 26, 1944.

5/ Cables No. 851, 1906, and 2270 to Bern dated March 15, June 3, and July 4, 1944, respectively.

The International Rescue and Relief Committee requested permission to send funds to its Swiss representative in Zurich for use in connection with the rescue and temporary relief of certain refugees trapped in France and Northern Italy. The sending of a total of \$135,000 was authorized in this connection.<sup>1/</sup>

Another Treasury license issued in February 1944 authorized the Unitarian Service Committee to send \$51,000 for relief work among refugees in Switzerland and for certain related administrative expenses. In March 1944 the work of the Unitarian Service Committee was expanded to include medical services and other relief to persons in concentration camps and elsewhere in France.<sup>2/</sup> The remittance of \$30,000 was later authorized in this connection, to be expended by Unitarian representatives in either Switzerland or Portugal. In August 1944 the remittance of another \$30,000 was authorized on behalf of the Unitarians for rescue and relief operations centering around Italy, Hungary, and the Balkans,<sup>3/</sup> bringing to \$111,000 the total amount of funds authorized to be remitted by the Unitarians to Switzerland.

In June 1944 the Board worked out with the National Congress of Industrial Organizations War Relief Committee and the Labor League for Human Rights, United Nations Relief, of the American Federation of Labor, three additional rescue and relief projects to be carried out from Switzerland. Special appropriations from the National War Fund were arranged to the extent of \$90,000 for Belgian War Relief, \$90,000 for the Queen Wilhelmina Fund, and \$20,000 for the Friends of Luxembourg, and appropriate Treasury licenses covering operations in these enemy-controlled areas were issued to the organizations named.<sup>4/</sup> Additional remittances of \$25,000 for Belgian War Relief,<sup>5/</sup> \$125,000 for the Queen Wilhelmina Fund,<sup>6/</sup> and \$25,000 for the Friends of Luxembourg were subsequently authorized.<sup>7/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> Cables No. 740 and 839 to Bern dated March 6 and 14, 1944; see also Cables No. 2775 and 2776 to Bern, both dated August 12, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cables No. 838 and 2367 to Bern dated March 14 and July 10, 1944; see also Cable No. 991 to Lisbon dated April 8, 1944.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 3022 to Bern dated September 1, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cables No. 2366, 2438, and 2440 to Bern dated July 10, July 17, and July 17, 1944, respectively.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 3314 to Bern dated September 26, 1944.
- <sup>6/</sup> Cables No. 2631, 3314, and 3729 to Bern dated July 31, September 26, and October 31, 1944, respectively; see also Cable No. 4692 from Bern dated July 22, 1944.
- <sup>7/</sup> Cable No. 2631 to Bern dated July 31, 1944; see also Cable No. 4692 from Bern dated July 22, 1944.



Other activities using Switzerland as a base and licensed by the Treasury included rescue and relief operations on behalf of the Poale Zion Organization and the Jewish National Workers Alliance, jointly, for which a remittance of \$18,000 was authorized;1/ relief work conducted by the American Friends Service Committee among displaced persons in France, for which \$25,000 was remitted;2/ and a project involving the relief of a rabbinical group stranded in Shanghai, for which the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee was authorized to remit a total of some \$238,000, these funds being in addition to a remittance made by the Jewish Labor Committee and to substantial amounts sent by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for the relief of refugees in Shanghai.

Needs of Yugoslav Refugees in Switzerland Investigated. In May 1944 the Board advised Representative McClelland that the United Yugoslav Relief Fund had been urged by various interested individuals to supply assistance to Yugoslav nationals in Switzerland in the following categories: Jewish refugees, students, interned escaped civilians, and escaped prisoners of war. Although these groups were under the care of the Swiss Government and the Swiss Red Cross, accounts received by the Board varied as to the seriousness of their unmet needs. Inasmuch as it appeared that the United Yugoslav Relief Fund would be willing and able to supplement the Swiss program, if necessary, the Board asked Representative McClelland to indicate the nature and extent of the needs of these groups.3/

McClelland replied that there were some 1,250 civilian Yugoslav refugees in Switzerland at the beginning of July 1944, in addition to military internees. Three relief organizations in Switzerland were attempting to care for these people, but with limited funds. McClelland indicated that assistance, particularly in connection with the relief of children and students, would therefore be welcomed. The Swiss Government, it was said, would have no objection to the sending of such funds.4/

1/ Cable No. 2930 to Bern dated August 25, 1944. These two organizations were also authorized to conduct joint rescue and relief operations in enemy territory from Palestine, for which remittances to the extent of \$33,000 were licensed; see Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations.

2/ Cable No. 2062 to Bern dated June 15, 1944; see also Cable No. 4423 from Bern dated July 11, 1944, and Cables No. 2783 and 2785 to Bern, both dated August 14, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1721 to Bern dated May 17, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 4298 from Bern dated July 6, 1944.

Discussions with the President's War Relief Control Board were then undertaken by representatives of the United Yugoslav Relief Fund, on the basis of information relayed by the Board.

Other Remittances. The remittance to Switzerland of \$5,000 from the Greek Government-in-Exile was approved by the Treasury in March 1944 for the purpose of providing relief to certain Greek nationals interned in northern Italy. In another instance the Treasury Department, upon the Board's request, approved the remittance to Switzerland of a small private sum to be used to enable the escape of an individual from enemy territory.

Funds Provided Board Representative. Soon after the appointment of Roswell D. McClelland as the Board's Special Representative in Switzerland, the Board remitted to him a moderate sum to be used as an emergency fund at his discretion for rescue and relief purposes.<sup>1/</sup> In May 1944 Representative McClelland informed the Board that, after thorough examination of rescue and relief possibilities from Switzerland, he had concluded that any really effective action would have to be taken through underground channels and that substantial amounts of money would be required for the achievement of any noteworthy results.<sup>2/</sup>

After careful consideration of Representative McClelland's findings, the Board obtained funds for certain urgent relief and rescue projects which he had proposed. By the end of 1944, sums aggregating more than half a million dollars had been dispatched to Bern,<sup>3/</sup> a large portion having been made available by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the balance by the Board. Access to the special exchange facilities available to the United States Government made possible the realization of more than two and a quarter million Swiss francs net from these remittances.

As the military situation in Europe developed, the possibilities for continuing operations of the kind for which these discretionary funds were intended became increasingly limited, so that slightly over one million Swiss francs were still unused when the German armies surrendered. Expenditures to the extent of approximately a million two hundred thousand francs were made between May 1, 1944, and May 31, 1945; 62 per cent by December 31, 1944, 25 per cent between January 1 and March 31, 1945 (one-sixth of which was in settlement of commitments for rescue operations

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1434 to Bern dated April 25, 1944,

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 3290 from Bern dated May 27, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cables No. 1994, 2898, 3923, and 4400 to Bern dated June 10, August 23, November 18, and December 30, 1944; see also Cable No. 2048 to Bern dated June 14, 1944.

performed prior to that period), and the remaining 13 per cent in April and May 1945. Actual expenditures during the latter two months were very small, however, since almost 90 per cent of the disbursements then made represented the cost of relief supplies distributed in 1944.

In urging continued assistance to reliable organizations in Switzerland to enable them to carry out relief projects, Representative McClelland suggested that if possible all publicity with respect to the progress made by such organizations be avoided, inasmuch as publicity might compromise the aid which neutral authorities, such as the International Red Cross and Swiss officials, might be prepared to lend to rescue and relief operations from Switzerland.<sup>1/</sup> The Board accepted Representative McClelland's recommendation on this score, and no publicity was sought with respect to the vast amount of aid being extended war refugees from Switzerland.

Accomplishments with Funds Provided. Detailed reports forwarded by Representative McClelland in November 1944 and June 1945 described how funds provided by the Board were utilized.<sup>2/</sup> The reports reflected the wide interest and invaluable cooperation which were given to refugee relief and rescue measures by various groups. In addition to the collaboration of Jewish organizations and other private relief agencies and religious groups, rescue activities were undertaken throughout enemy territory by groups composed of Dutch Jews, German political refugees, and Hungarian students, and by French, Italian, Czech, Yugoslav, and Spanish resistance organizations. Board funds were used in part to alleviate conditions within the ranks of the latter groups, whose own need often was so great that they could give little cooperation without themselves receiving some assistance.

Funds provided by the Board financed the cost of temporary maintenance, false papers, transportation, and other expenses incident to concealment and border-passing operations. A small, but well-organized relief group composed of Dutch Jews and known as the Dutch Jewish Coordinating Committee specialized in assistance to Dutch Jewish refugees and Jews of other nationalities coming out of Holland. A committee made up of German political refugees, "Freies Deutschland," with close contacts with Germany and resistance groups inside Germany aided the escape of particularly endangered political refugees across the border into Switzerland and in the maintenance

1/ Cable No. 3110 from Bern dated May 16, 1944.

2/ Record of Expenditures from War Refugee Board Discretionary Funds dated November 27, 1944, comprising document 56, and Record of Expenditures dated June 2, 1945 (and accompanying letter from Representative McClelland in Bern dated May 31, 1945), comprising document 57. See also Cables No. 4666, 4904, and 5343 from Bern dated July 21, July 31, and August 17, 1944, respectively.

of endangered racial and political refugees hiding in Germany along the border. The work of the German group was financed not so much in currency on the German side as in kind. About once a month a second-hand suitcase full of such small, unobtainable items as pocket knives, toilet soap, razor blades, cigarette lighters, and cheap Swiss watches, all highly prized and of greater value than bank notes, was smuggled across the border, and "human lives were saved with what could have been picked up for a hundred dollars in any dime store in the United States."1/

The Franc Tireur Partisans, a French resistance group operating in the Department of Haute Savoie, helped refugees to hide along the French side of the border and to cross into Switzerland. A group of German political refugees in France, supported by the Unitarian Service Committee, did rescue work among endangered foreign refugees in Southern France, maintaining persons in hiding and financing escapes to Switzerland and Spain. Spanish partisan groups (Spanish Comité d'Union National) operating along the whole chain of the Pyrenees from Cerbere to Hendaye in France successfully passed between 700 and 1,000 Jewish refugees over the mountains into Spain with the cooperation of Jewish organizations. Through the Spanish groups relief supplies were sent to imperiled Spaniards in prisons and camps in Southern France.

Relief sections of various components of the French resistance movements assisted persons victimized by the Gestapo and their families, sent relief supplies to persons imprisoned by the Germans, and aided foreign refugees, including a great many Jews, by hiding those in danger of deportation, securing false papers and ration cards for them, and passing them over the border into Switzerland. The 200,000 Swiss francs made available to the "Conseil National de la Resistance" and the "Comité des Oeuvres Sociales des Organisations de Resistance" produced about 12,000,000 French francs, all except 900,000 of which were used for the rescue and relief activities of charitable agencies and affiliated or subsidiary resistance groups. The relief needs of individuals in France were tragically urgent and underfinanced during the resistance period, and 400,000 French francs were allocated for such cases. An allotment of 500,000 francs to the director of Catholic relief work in Lyon and its environs was largely instrumental in organizing the release of some 200 wounded prisoners whom the Germans were keeping at a Lyon hospital until they recovered so that they could be executed.

Effective rescue work was accomplished in Poland, Hungary, and the Balkans by the "Hechaluz," a young people's Zionist Labor group.

I/ Report on the Activities of the War Refugee Board through its Representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, enclosed with a letter from Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated August 2, 1945.



Substantial amounts contributed to this organization from Board funds enabled some 2,000 persons to escape to Rumania, 250 to Slovakia, and some 500 into Northern Yugoslavia. Jews were assisted in their flight from Hungary by way of relay points maintained by the "Hechaluz" where Jewish refugees were fed, sheltered, hidden, given false papers and money, and sent on into Rumania with the "cooperation" of local authorities. To a lesser extent the "Hechaluz" helped Jews from Poland to cross the Silesian frontier into Slovakia, where the situation for Jews was much more favorable in the early summer of 1944 than it later turned out to be. Subsequent contributions assisted in the maintenance and protection of young Jews in hiding in Budapest, Prague, Bratislava, and Berlin and financed the escape of a small group from Berlin to Switzerland in March 1945.

A small sum was given to a Hungarian student organization in Zurich which sought to obtain by collective wires Palestine certificates for their relatives in Hungary. Grants to "Pharmacie Nouvelle" included the cost of a shipment of medical and restorative products sent into Northern Yugoslavia with the help of Yugoslav Partisans and divided between needy Partisans near the Hungarian frontier and incoming Hungarian Jewish refugees.

With contributions from the Board and a private organization, Czech Partisans accomplished the capture of the camps of Sered and Novaky in Slovakia and the rescue of an estimated 1,500 persons.

Relief measures and daring rescues from prisons were also conducted by Italian resistance elements of the Milan Liberation Committee, and Board funds financed two investigative trips undertaken by volunteer agents into Northern Italy.<sup>1/</sup> Other expenditures included fees for courier services into enemy areas, the costs involved in publishing in three languages and circulating in Switzerland a series of reports concerning Jewish persecutions in Hungary, and to support special research and intelligence services.

In connection with the latter type of operation for which Board funds were utilized, the Dutch Jewish Coordinating Committee, after the liberation of France, expanded its parcel work and its "postcard location" of Jewish deportees in German-occupied territory. A very complete card file covering practically all Jewish deportees from Holland, whether of Dutch or other nationalities, was built up by dint of painstaking investigation conducted by mailing out thousands of registered postcards with prepaid answers attached, most of them directed to Poland and Upper Silesia. Although answers were received to only about five per cent of the cards sent, sometimes a card would come back to Switzerland after

1/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

many months bearing precious information concerning half a dozen relatives or friends in addition to news of the addressor. Often the answer consisted only of the stamp of the local Jewish organization, which, however, meant that the individual in question was alive. Once a person's whereabouts was established with reasonable certainty it was possible for relief parcels to be sent, and the information thus assembled was of especial value in this respect.

Many of the members of "Freies Deutschland" had been or were still in concentration camps, and the intelligence service conducted by this group concerning such camps as Dachau, Landsberg, Oranienburg, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen became exceedingly valuable to the Board and to the International Red Cross in connection with later shipments of food parcels when it was extremely important to know the attitude of the local camp commander and other conditions prevailing at a given camp.

The cost of 54,756 kilograms of foodstuffs salvaged from the cargo of the "S.S. Christina," a steamer carrying International Red Cross goods damaged by aerial attack, was met from Board funds; 1/ these funds were also used to finance special pharmaceutical and restorative parcels for women in the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck. Emergency food and clothing purchases in Bratislava and Vienna for Hungarian Jews in Austria were underwritten to the extent of 200,000 Swiss francs.

Evacuation of Abandoned Children from France. Various reports received by the Board from private sources early in 1944 indicated that there were in France between 8,000 and 10,000 Jewish children who had been forcibly abandoned by their parents upon the seizure or deportation of the latter, and who likewise faced deportation or death at the hands of occupying authorities unless they could be evacuated immediately.

The desperate plight of these children was further revealed in various official communications from United States Missions abroad. According to one such report, in one instance in the fall of 1942 approximately 4,000 Jewish children between the ages of 2 and 14 were deported to undisclosed destinations in windowless box-cars, without food or water. Moreover, official and other reliable reports indicated that the French police, under German orders, were completing a census of abandoned Jewish children still in France, this registration being preliminary to their eventual deportation or death.

In view of these circumstances the Board worked out with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee a program for evacuating thousands of these children from France to Switzerland and for helping sustain the lives of other child victims until evacuation could be accomplished.

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1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

While efforts were promptly directed toward taking full advantage of all possible places of asylum other than Switzerland, the latter, because of its proximity and status, represented the most feasible immediate refuge for these victims of enemy oppression. Several thousand children had, in fact, already managed to reach Switzerland by early 1944. Because of economic and other considerations, however, the Swiss Government demanded adequate assurances that such children, whether already in Switzerland or to be admitted in the future, would be evacuated after the war before it would agree to permit the entry of additional child refugees from France.

Nevertheless, in December 1943, as a result of representations made in Bern by private refugee relief agencies, the Swiss Federal Police had signified Switzerland's willingness to admit an initial contingent of 1,500 Jewish children, boys up to 16 years of age and girls up to 18, through clandestine channels. The fact that this quota was never filled was attributed by Board Representative McClelland to the difficulty of getting children up to the border in France, owing to disrupted communications and growing unrest in the Haute Savoie and Jura regions which broke into open insurrection shortly after the Allied landings in Normandy in June 1944, rather than to any lack of cooperation on the part of Swiss authorities.

Early Offers of Asylum to Child Refugees. In connection with the eventual evacuation of these children from Switzerland, the Board was not unmindful of the fact that during 1942 the following offers of refuge, variously conditioned, had already influenced to a considerable extent Switzerland's policy on admitting child refugees: Argentina, up to 1,000 visas for children under 14 years of age; Australia, 150 Jewish refugee children from Vichy France between the ages of 7 and 14; Canada, admission of 1,000 children under 18 years of age, under non-immigrant status and for the duration of the war; Chile, admission of a small number; Dominican Republic, transportation and asylum for 3,500 children from France; Palestine, 1,000 certificates for unaccompanied children under 18; South Africa, temporary stay to 200 Youth Aliyah certificate holders if no passports were available to Palestine; and the United Kingdom, unlimited number having near relatives (mother, father, grandparent, uncle, aunt, brother, or sister) in the United Kingdom. It was hoped that the governments of these and other countries could be persuaded to make or renew such offers of asylum.

As for the United States itself, arrangements had been made in the fall of 1942 by the United States Committee for the Care of European Children, with the approval of the Attorney General, for the evacuation of 1,000 child refugees from France to the United States. Later in 1942, as arrangements were being completed with

the Vichy régime to allow the departure of the first 500 of these children, came the complete occupation of France by the Nazis. The entire project was thus halted, at least on the diplomatic level.

Palestine Certificates for Child Refugees Proposed. Shortly before the inception of the Board, the United States Government had proposed that the British authorize the allocation of immigration certificates to certain refugee children so as to permit their entry into Palestine within the total allowed under the White Paper. The British replied that since the Swiss had not yet obtained any promise of exit permits from the Vichy régime and had made no representations to either the Intergovernmental Committee or the British Government regarding conditions under which they would receive the children, the entire question was "hypothetical." Under these circumstances, the British indicated that they could not make commitments for any substantial number of certificates for cases which might never arise, as such action would reduce the number of certificates available for regular allocations. It was asserted, however, that appropriate consideration would be accorded the matter if and when the Swiss Government approached the Intergovernmental Committee for concrete assurances.1/

Question of Irish Asylum Reopened. On March 14, 1944, the Board cabled Minister Gray in Dublin, asking that he inform the Irish officials concerned of this Government's appreciation of their humanitarian offer to provide refuge for 500 children. Minister Gray further advised the officials with whom he talked that the Board was endeavoring to obtain shipping facilities to transport the children to Eire. The question of whether the Irish Government was willing to take up with Vichy the matter of evacuating refugee children from France was also raised informally. Inquiry was likewise made as to whether the Irish were willing at that time to guarantee to Switzerland that after the war they would accept from that country 500 of the refugee children evacuated from France.2/

An affirmative reply was received from the Irish Department of External Affairs in response to the Board's request that the temporary refuge be accorded immediately. The Irish indicated, however, that so far they had had no success in securing permission

1/ Dispatch No. 14393 from London to the State Department dated March 11, 1944, enclosing letter from the British Foreign Office to the United States Embassy in London dated February 18, 1944, both comprising document 58.

2/ Cable No. 39 to Dublin dated March 14, 1944, comprising document 59.



for Jews to leave occupied countries. Accordingly, it was suggested that, while the Irish Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin had been instructed to make such a request, this Government should also ask the Swiss Government to endeavor to obtain the necessary permits.<sup>1/</sup>

United States Immigration Visas Made Available. On March 13, 1944, in an attempt to expand evacuation efforts and provide such guarantees as the Swiss demanded, authorization was given to United States consular officers in Switzerland to issue during the current quota year up to 4,000 immigration visas to refugee children arriving during the first half of 1944.<sup>2/</sup> These visas were to be issued without regard to religion, nationality, or stateless status and without regard to the availability of means of transportation to the United States. In view of the lack of means of transportation between Switzerland and the United States, the Board was able to obtain the agreement of the State Department to permit the replacement of all such visas as they expired, so that except for children who in the interim reached the age of 16, the child refugees concerned would hold valid visas for the duration of the war and for six months thereafter. The State Department also agreed that the issuance of these visas, including their renewal and replacement, need not be subject to the "advisory opinion" procedure (often the cause of interminable delay) or the much criticized security test (as a result of which visas were frequently denied solely because the would-be immigrant had close relatives in enemy-controlled areas).

The Swiss Government was promptly advised of these instructions and was urged in turn to relax border controls and to take such other action as would encourage and facilitate the entry of refugee children. At the same time the Board reiterated its previous commitment to undertake to arrange for any financing that might be necessary to maintain refugees from enemy oppression arriving in Switzerland.

<sup>1/</sup> Airgram No. A-16 from Dublin dated April 13, 1944, comprising document 60.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 891 to Bern dated March 18, 1944, comprising document 61 ; see also Cable No. 2123 from Bern dated April 6, 1944. Authorization was also given to United States consular officers in Spain and Portugal to issue up to 1,000 immigration visas to refugee children reaching those countries during the first half of 1944; see Rescue to and through Spain and Rescue to and through Portugal. The provisions of these authorizations were subsequently extended to July 1945; see Cable No. 2236 to Bern dated July 3, 1944, comprising document 62.

Organizations in Switzerland responsible for the care of refugee children later inquired as to whether these visas would still be available after the war.<sup>1/</sup> The Board replied that since the authorization had been given for the purpose of encouraging the Swiss to receive refugee children, it would remain in effect as long as necessary to influence Swiss action with respect to refugee children seeking admission to Switzerland to escape enemy persecution.<sup>2/</sup>

Parallel Action by Canada and Australia Urged. In an effort to obtain action by Canada and Australia parallel to that taken by this Government, Canadian and Australian officials were advised of the instructions issued with respect to the granting of United States visas to refugee children and were urged to do likewise.<sup>3/</sup> In the course of discussions in Ottawa between representatives of the United States Embassy and of the Canadian Department of External Affairs, it was urged that Canada, in particular, take steps to issue visas to the 1,000 children it had previously advised the Intergovernmental Committee it was willing to accept.<sup>4/</sup>

Latin American Republics Respond Favorably. In April 1944, in an effort to induce the Latin American republics to give similar assurances to Switzerland, instructions were dispatched to the United States Missions in Latin American countries with the request that these governments be approached.<sup>5/</sup> Latin American governments lacking consular representatives in Switzerland qualified to issue visas were advised that United States consular officers were prepared to issue such visas on behalf of the various governments, where such assistance was desired.

Favorable responses were in turn received from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

The Brazilian reply was not received until August of 1944. At that time the Board was advised that President Vargas himself

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 7589 from Bern dated November 17, 1944, comprising document 63.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 4027 to Bern dated November 29, 1944, comprising document 64.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 40 to Canberra dated April 12, 1944, comprising document 65; see also Airgram No. A-6 from Canberra dated February 24, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> Memorandum from the United States Embassy in Ottawa dated February 15, 1944.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 1215 to Rio de Janeiro dated April 14, 1944, and Circular Airgram to Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, dated April 15, 1944, the latter comprising document 66; repeated on April 20, 1944, to Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay.

had finally approved a plan to permit the entrance of 500 child refugees from Europe provided the Brazilian Government would not be required to meet the expenses of transportation to and maintenance in Brazil.1/

The question of the receipt by Costa Rica of such refugee children was discussed by a representative of the United States Embassy there with Senor Mendez, head of a semi-official agency charged with the care of orphaned children. Senor Mendez was reported to have stated that his organization might be able to place 1,000 children in private homes in Costa Rica and might itself be able to take a smaller number. Inquiry was made, however, as to whether assurances could be given that the children would remain in Costa Rica permanently, since it was felt that many private families would be reluctant to accept children who might be returned to Europe after the war. The expenses of any children accepted by Costa Rica, it was stated, would be borne by the families concerned; transportation expenses, however, would have to be met from other sources. In the event the Mendez organization itself took any children, it was indicated that expenses would have to be met from other sources.2/

Ambassador Braden in Havana indicated his belief that if the care of any child refugees admitted to Cuba were left to local authorities, irregularities would probably occur, particularly in connection with any financing that might be arranged by the Board. Ambassador Braden therefore suggested that, before he approached the Cuban Government on the matter of giving Switzerland the assurances requested, it should be ascertained whether the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee would be prepared to care for such children through the Joint Relief Committee in Havana and to provide the latter with the necessary funds.3/ A commitment guarantying the maintenance of 1,000 children was subsequently obtained by the Board from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,4/ and Ambassador Braden was so advised.5/ The Board was then asked to supply detailed information as to the procedure contemplated in making such funds available, should the Cuban Government agree to the entry of these children. Ambassador Braden added

1/ Airgram No. A-1568 from Rio de Janeiro dated August 22, 1944, comprising document 67; see also Dispatches No. 14890 and 16169 from Rio dated March 11 and June 1, 1944.

2/ Airgram No. A-390 from San José dated June 16, 1944, comprising document 68.

3/ Unnumbered airgram from Havana dated April 22, 1944.

4/ Letter from the Joint Distribution Committee dated May 16, 1944.

5/ Airgram No. A-835 to Havana dated May 22, 1944.

that, despite continuing discussions with Cabinet officials and with the President of Cuba, he had not yet been able to obtain a definite acceptance of the proposal.<sup>1/</sup> The Board in turn indicated that the transfer of Joint Distribution Committee funds for the maintenance of the child refugees involved would be through established commercial banking facilities, with the approval and authorization of the Treasury Department. It was added that should plans become necessary for the actual immigration of refugee children into Cuba, such plans would not be developed without previous consultation with the Cuban Government.<sup>2/</sup> In view of these assurances, Cuba agreed to accept 1,000 refugee children from France and Hungary.<sup>3/</sup>

The Dominican Republic's offer involved the reception of a minimum of 1,000 refugee children up to 16 years of age and a maximum of 2,000. It was stated that private institutions subsidized by the State would assume responsibility for the children upon their arrival.<sup>4/</sup> Since the Dominican Republic had no mission in Switzerland through which the Swiss Government might be notified of the Dominican offer, the Foreign Minister subsequently proposed sending a note to the United States Embassy in the Dominican Republic requesting that Switzerland be informed through the United States Legation in Bern. It was also proposed that this Government accept responsibility for the actual issuance of the visas.<sup>5/</sup>

In September, in response to the Board's request to the various Latin American countries that refuge be guaranteed for child refugees from Hungary,<sup>6/</sup> the Ecuadoran Government indicated that Ecuador would be able to accept approximately 300 orphaned or abandoned children from Europe.<sup>7/</sup>

El Salvador agreed to admit 100 children. Inquiry was made, however, as to whether the cost of constructing a suitable building and other maintenance expenses would be borne by the Board.<sup>8/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Airgram No. A-1551 from Havana dated July 17, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Airgram No. A-1412 to Havana dated August 14, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Dispatch No. 7845 from Havana dated September 7, 1944, comprising document 69 ; see also Cable No. 798 from Havana dated September 5, 1944, and Rescue from Hungary.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 219 from Ciudad Trujillo dated May 4, 1944, comprising document 70 ; see also Dispatch No. 1760 from Ciudad Trujillo dated May 9, 1944, and Cable No. 200 to Ciudad Trujillo dated May 17, 1944.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 240 from Ciudad Trujillo dated May 19, 1944, comprising document 71.

<sup>6/</sup> See Rescue from Hungary.

<sup>7/</sup> Dispatch No. 2140 from Quito dated September 15, 1944, comprising document 72; see also Cable No. 680 to Quito dated August 10 and Dispatch No. 2053 from Quito dated August 29, 1944.

<sup>8/</sup> Dispatch No. 1531 from San Salvador dated May 4, 1944, comprising document 73.



Guatemala likewise agreed to accept 100 children but stipulated children who were preferably of French and Belgian extraction.1/

President Carias was described as willing for Honduras to receive a maximum of 50 children on condition that all transportation and maintenance expenses be met by other than Honduran agencies. Inasmuch as Honduras had no diplomatic or consular representatives in Switzerland, the Board was asked to suggest some practicable form of visa procedure. Clarification was also requested as to whether the children would be expected to remain in Honduras or would be returned to their countries of origin after the war.2/

Ambassador Messersmith reported that he had not approached the Mexican Government on the matter because he feared that the answer to such a proposal "made in this way at this time" would be negative. Ambassador Messersmith based this fear on an informal conversation with the Minister of Foreign Relations, on the financial straits in which the Mexican Government reportedly found itself at the moment, and on what was described as personal knowledge of the lack of facilities for the accommodation of such children.3/

Nicaragua authorized the Nicaraguan Consul in Bern to issue visas for 100 children, specifying that these were to be granted without regard for nationality or religion, and were to be kept valid until transportation to Nicaragua should become available.4/

The Paraguayan Government indicated its willingness to cooperate in efforts to secure havens, provided adequate financial assistance could be made available. With respect to the proposal that Paraguay notify the Swiss Government of its position in this matter, the Board was advised that the Paraguayan Government did not maintain a diplomatic mission in Switzerland.5/

1/ Dispatch No. 1104 from Guatemala dated May 15, 1944, comprising document 74.

2/ Airgram No. A-165 from Tegucigalpa dated April 27, 1944, comprising document 75 ; see also Airgram No. A-163 from Tegucigalpa dated April 25, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 17235 from Mexico City dated April 27, 1944; see also unnumbered airgram from Mexico City dated April 25, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 271 from Managua dated May 5, 1944, comprising document 76.

5/ Dispatch No. 2148 from Asuncion dated June 3, 1944, comprising document 77 ; see also Dispatch No. 2198 from Asuncion dated June 17, 1944.

Information with respect to the nationalities included in the proposed immigration was requested by Peru before a decision could be made.1/ The Board in turn indicated its belief that, for the most part, Polish, French, Belgian, and stateless children of German and Austrian origin would be involved; emphasis was urged, however, upon the humanitarian aspect of the action suggested.2/ The Peruvian Government subsequently indicated its willingness to receive up to 50 children of French or Belgian nationality and on condition that Peru's responsibility begin at the port of Callao.3/

Uruguay eventually agreed to admit 500 children.4/

Representations Made Meanwhile to Vichy. In April 1944 Minister Harrison advised the Board that, despite repeated informal representations with respect to the release of such children made to the Vichy régime by the Swiss Government at the request of the Intergovernmental Committee, Laval's decision was negative, with no explanation being given. It was urged that no publicity be given concerning Swiss intervention in this matter of Vichy's refusal, for fear of halting further efforts by the Swiss Government in this direction.5/

Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland therefore urged that appropriate instructions be issued to the Swiss Legation at Vichy with respect to a formal approach to Laval on the matter. Subsequently, Swiss Minister Stucki repeatedly requested Laval and other Vichy authorities to permit endangered children to leave France, but to no avail.6/ Swiss overtures to the Germans to permit the evacuation of children likewise failed.7/

Issuance of United States Visas Delayed. Meanwhile, on May 16, 1944, Board Representative McClelland reported that at that time none of the 4,000 visas for children authorized by this Government had been issued. Protracted investigations on the part of the organizations responsible for child refugees in Switzerland, for the purpose of determining eligibility for overseas emigration.

- 1/ Cable No. 541 from Lima dated April 24, 1944.
- 2/ Airgram No. A-330 to Lima dated May 1, 1944.
- 3/ Dispatch No. 711 from Lima dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 78 ; see also Cable No. 866 from Lima of the same date.
- 4/ Dispatch No. 4743 from Montevideo dated August 29, 1944, comprising document 79 ; see also Cable No. 817 from Montevideo dated August 29, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 2236 from Bern dated April 11, 1944, comprising document 80.
- 6/ Cable No. 4401 from Bern dated July 11, 1944.
- 7/ Cable No. 5721 from Bern dated September 1, 1944.

were cited as one reason for the delay. In connection with efforts to obtain information as to the whereabouts of each child's near relatives, one question said to be causing concern was the advisability of certifying for emigration children whose parents had been deported to the east but who could not at the same time be considered as deceased. In some cases the question therefore arose as to whether it would not be more advisable to plan for a waiting period after the cessation of hostilities or until it could be determined whether the parents were still alive and in Europe. Representative McClelland indicated that all children unequivocally eligible for emigration to the United States could begin receiving their visas as soon as the investigation of individual cases from this angle was completed.

Approximately 3,500 refugee children having arrived prior to 1944 were reportedly in Switzerland at the time. Representative McClelland stated that only about 700 to 1,000 of these children, however, could be considered as "abandoned" because of the death, deportation, or disappearance of parents, and therefore eligible for United States visas. An estimated 350 parentless Jewish children under 16 had entered Switzerland clandestinely from France during the early part of 1944; another 125 child refugees had entered Switzerland along with parents or relatives. In view of the fact that it had become progressively more difficult for rescue organizations to bring children within striking distance of the Swiss border, Representative McClelland voiced doubt as to whether the number of children eligible for United States visas and able to reach Switzerland by July of 1944 would reach 600. Because of the small over-all number of refugee children then in Switzerland and apparently eligible for United States visas, Representative McClelland inquired as to whether it would be possible to make such visas available to all of them, rather than just to those who had entered the country since the beginning of January 1944.1/

In response to this inquiry, the Board indicated its feeling that the issuance of United States visas to children who entered Switzerland prior to 1944 would not accomplish the purpose for which the visas were made available; the principal motivation behind the authorization of these visas, it pointed out, was the encouragement such authorization might give to the Swiss Government to permit the entrance of still other child refugees.2/

Evacuation Operations Hazardous. During the first five months of 1944 some 500 refugee children were reported to have

1/ Cable No. 3107 from Bern dated May 16, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2023 to Bern dated June 13, 1944, comprising document 81 ; see also Cable No. 4297 from Bern dated July 6, 1944.

entered Switzerland from France. This number would have been considerably greater, it was thought, had it not been for conditions prevailing along the French border, particularly the disruption of all regular transportation in France. In the course of these operations arrests were reported among the staffs of organizations carrying on such work in France. Organizations that had been officially dissolved upon the occupation of France, but which continued to function, were said to be maintaining several thousand abandoned children there, in addition to hundreds that had been placed with private families.1/

Barely 600 abandoned refugee children and about an equal number of children in the company of their parents or relatives reached Switzerland from France between January and July 1944. On July 15, Representative McClelland cabled that a census had been completed of refugee children then in Switzerland for whom overseas emigration was considered desirable after the war, including those arriving both before and since January 1, 1944. The organizations to whom the children had been entrusted had then begun to designate children for various destinations. Actual presentation of the children to United States consulates for special immigration visas was expected to begin shortly, though the total to be presented was not expected to exceed 500.2/

Eligibility for Children's Visas Extended. In August 1944, as a result of the increasingly desperate situation in Hungary, United States consular officers in Switzerland were authorized to issue visas to refugee children arriving in that country from Hungary, previous instructions concerning the 5,000 United States visas made available for refugee children reaching Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal from France having been so amended.3/

Actually, no United States visas were granted under these authorizations to refugee children admitted to Switzerland, since no children were ever presented to receive such visas.4/

Temporary Refuge for Palestine Certificate Holders. In early August 1944 the Swiss Government advised its Minister in Budapest that Switzerland would be prepared to give temporary refuge to 8,000 individuals holding Palestine certificates, in the event that they were unable to proceed eastward. This was in addition to the proposed asylum in Switzerland for 5,000 expectant mothers and

1/ Cable No. 3652 from Bern dated June 8, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 4530 from Bern dated July 15, 1944.

3/ See Rescue from Hungary.

4/ Cable No. 3044 from Bern dated June 5, 1945.



children from Hungary. Considerable doubt was felt by the Swiss, however, as to whether these refugees would be able to reach Switzerland since it was the Gestapo from whom the necessary permission would have to be obtained.1/

Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were instructed to advise the Swiss Government of the Board's genuine appreciation of this action and to suggest informally that a public statement concerning it would help prevent the Hungarians and Germans from pleading that emigration was not feasible, and would provide an example to other governments.2/

Italian Refugees Admitted. In October 1944 the Swiss Federal Council was prevailed upon to agree to the admission into Switzerland of all Italian civilian and resistance group refugees from the Dossola Valley. An estimated 7,000 persons were involved.3/

Evacuations from Bergen Belsen.4/ In August of 1944 the evacuation to Switzerland of a group of some 320 Hungarian Jews from a German concentration camp known as Bergen-Belsen had been accomplished. On December 6, 1944, a further group of some 1,355 persons who had been interned in this camp were evacuated to Switzerland and were temporarily housed near St. Gall under the control of the Swiss Army.5/

Swiss officials having indicated that the early removal of these refugees from Swiss territory was desired, efforts were begun immediately to arrange for the onward evacuation of both of these groups.6/ In this connection, the Swiss Foreign Office indicated that the Swiss Federal Railways were prepared to furnish trains for the transportation of these people to a French port of embarkation.

Although information concerning the composition of the groups was cabled to Representative Mann in London 7/ with the request that he take up with the British the question of the possible admission to Palestine of all or any part of these groups, no immediate decision could be obtained.

1/ Cable No. 5248 from Bern dated August 12, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2908 to Bern dated August 23, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 7022 from Bern dated October 23, 1944.

4/ See also Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Spanish Nationality.

5/ Cable No. 7997 from Bern dated December 7, 1944, comprising document 82.

6/ Cable No. 8379 from Bern dated December 28, 1944; see also Cable No. 49 to Bern dated January 3, 1945.

7/ Cables No. 66 and 308 to London dated January 3 and 13, 1945.

The British, who took the position that the best solution would be their removal to some other place of temporary refuge where their claims to admissibility to Palestine could be examined, agreed to the decision made to move the entire group, then totaling some 1,672 persons, to a camp at Philippeville in North Africa pending final determination of their ultimate destination.<sup>1/</sup> The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration undertook to make arrangements for the reception and care of the refugees at Philippeville,<sup>2/</sup> and the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) was to arrange for transportation from the French port of embarkation.<sup>3/</sup>

Late in January 1945 another group of some 150 Bergen-Belsen evacuees reached Switzerland. Their arrival was incident to the American-German exchange then taking place in Switzerland, and their release apparently was based on their possession of Latin American documents. The exchangees were in a state of acute undernourishment, as evidenced by the fact that three of them died during the short space of their stay in Switzerland and several others had to be hospitalized and were unable to proceed with the rest of the group, which was promptly moved on to the refugee camp at Philippeville.<sup>4/</sup>

Refugees Evacuated from Theresienstadt. On February 7, 1945, a group of 1,210 refugees from the concentration camp at Theresienstadt arrived in Switzerland.<sup>5/</sup> Board Representative McClelland arranged with the Swiss Federal Police for entry permission and preliminary reception and housing preparations for this group, which was composed largely of adults and included several hundred Dutch Jews. These refugees were reported to be in fairly satisfactory physical condition in contrast to the previously arrived exchangees from Bergen-Belsen.<sup>6/</sup>

The liberation of these Jewish civilian internees resulted from the efforts of a former Swiss Federal Councillor, who was said to have promised, without authorization to show gratitude

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1870 from London dated February 23, 1945. See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: Palestine.
- <sup>2/</sup> Letter to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration dated January 16, 1945, comprising document 83; and letter from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration dated January 30, 1945, comprising document 84.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 369 to Bern dated January 22, 1945.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 744 from Bern dated February 2, 1945; see Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 913 from Bern dated February 9, 1945, comprising document 85.
- <sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 881 from Bern dated February 8, 1945.

in cash for the release of the group, and who stated to Representative McClelland that this was to be the first of a series of similar convoys. The sole condition reportedly imposed by Himmler was that the group should not include technicians, intellectuals, or prominent Jews. Inasmuch as no ransom was paid, it was considered unlikely that additional groups would be released.1/

The arrival at this time of some 540 French men and women believed to have been political prisoners and a few Swiss nationals said to have been imprisoned by the Germans on espionage charges was apparently linked with the efforts which brought about the release of the Theresienstadt group. The French group reached the Swiss border on the night of February 7, 1945, en route to France.

Efforts Continued for Removal of Refugee Groups from Switzerland. As in the case of the Bergen-Belsen evacuees, the Swiss requested the early removal of the Theresienstadt group from Switzerland. Accordingly, plans were revised to provide for the inclusion of some 760 of this group in the arrangements being made for the transportation of the Bergen-Belsen group and for their reception and maintenance at suitable camps outside Switzerland. The remainder of the Theresienstadt group, consisting of Dutch nationals, were to be permitted to stay in Switzerland pending arrangements by the Dutch Government for their repatriation directly to the Netherlands.2/

Preparations were made for transporting the refugees in two convoys of approximately 1,100 persons each, with possibly a third smaller convoy later.3/ Plans for the departure of the first convoy in early May 1945 had to be abandoned because French authorities had not given final consent for their transit. In the meantime, the destination of the refugees was changed from Philippeville to Southern Italy.4/ Late in May, 700 Palestine certificates were authorized for refugees in Switzerland from Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, and plans for the departure of the first transport early in June had to be canceled because the refugees themselves objected to going to Italy instead of directly to Palestine.5/

Still later preparations for the departure of the Palestine certificate holders early in July 1945 could not be carried through because the emigrants involved had not been documented. By that time an extensive repatriation movement of more than 26,000

1/ Airgram No. A-230 from London dated March 7, 1945; see also Special Negotiations.

2/ Cable No. 1375 from Bern dated March 3, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 2299 from Bern dated April 20, 1945.

4/ Cable No. 2555 from Bern dated May 1, 1945.

5/ Cable No. 2982 from Bern dated June 1, 1945.

Italian refugees was under way,<sup>1/</sup> and other repatriables had left or were preparing to leave Switzerland as a result of the cessation of hostilities. In mid-July Swiss authorities, after reconsidering the entire question of the removal of the Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt groups, concluded that the evacuation of the non-Palestine certificate holders was undesirable in view of the opposition of the refugees themselves to being moved to a camp in Italy to await repatriation or overseas emigration.<sup>2/</sup> Ultimate arrangements therefore provided for the movement of only the 700 certificate holders proceeding to Palestine, the group to travel overland from Switzerland to Taranto, Italy.<sup>3/</sup> On August 20, 1945, a transport of 706 persons left Switzerland by special Swiss train.<sup>4/</sup>

Efforts Made To Evacuate Other Hungarians. According to information received by the Board in February 1945, 12,000 or more Jews deported from Hungary in June 1944 were in various types of camps under German authorities on former Austrian territory. Bearing in mind the energetic and generous efforts previously made by the Swiss Government to arrange for the exit from Hungary to temporary asylum in Switzerland of some 12,000 Jewish holders of Palestine certificates and Swedish protective documents whose departure German and Hungarian authorities had consented to in October 1944, but whose evacuation was prevented by developments in the military situation,<sup>5/</sup> the United States Legation in Bern asked the Swiss Government whether it would be willing to renew its approaches to the Germans in behalf of these Hungarian Jewish deportees in Austria. The Swiss were requested to ask the Germans to permit the departure of an equal or a larger number of Jewish refugees of Hungarian or other nationality located on former Austrian territory, it being suggested that such representations, if limited to those categories of deportees not being used by the Germans as labor, specifically, elderly persons, women and children, might have a greater chance of success. Renewed assurances were given that all such Jewish refugees admitted to Switzerland would be evacuated as soon as possible and that expenses incurred for their maintenance in Switzerland would be reimbursed.<sup>6/</sup>

Evacuation of Other Dutch Jews Proposed. The Board was advised on February 8, 1945, of a proposal submitted to the Dutch Government involving the evacuation to Switzerland of several hundred additional Dutch Jews reportedly being held at Theresienstadt and Bergen-Belsen. The views of the British and United States

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 3560 from Bern dated July 14, 1945.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2632 from Bern dated July 20, 1945.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 3394 from Bern dated August 15, 1945.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 3939 from Bern dated August 20, 1945, comprising document 86.

<sup>5/</sup> See Rescue from Hungary.

<sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 369 from Bern dated February 8, 1945.



Governments having been requested concerning ransom aspects of the proposal, a cable was sent to the Embassy in London informing it of this Government's approval of the continuation of the negotiations, under the conditions and provisions suggested by the Embassy and the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, for whatever value such negotiations might have in preserving the lives of the individuals in question or in enabling them to reach Switzerland.1/

Last-Minute Exterminations Feared. As the defeat of Germany became inevitable and as the threat of last-minute exterminations grew, private relief agencies in the United States were hopeful of being able to arrange large-scale escapes of refugees from Nazi persecution but were increasingly doubtful as to whether the Swiss Government would be willing to continue to permit an unlimited flow of refugees into Switzerland. Because of these fears, Board Representative McClelland was authorized to emphasize to the Swiss the fact that this Government's previous assurances concerning the maintenance and evacuation of refugees from enemy persecution were not restricted to any particular number of persons and that continued Swiss cooperation in this humanitarian endeavor would be greatly appreciated.2/

Representative McClelland had on various occasions conveyed to the Swiss such assurances with respect to the maintenance and evacuation of refugees admitted to Switzerland. He now pointed out that in the course of several months of close contact with various Swiss Government officials and agencies concerning the admission of refugees, he had observed no lack of willingness on the part of the Swiss to grant temporary asylum to large numbers of such persons, even though the Swiss had not yet elected to take advantage of the Board's offers to assist in maintaining such refugees. The Swiss themselves had, in fact, been active in efforts to expedite and organize the evacuation of still more refugees from Axis territory and had repeatedly interceded with the Germans for this purpose, as in the instance of the proposed evacuation of more than 12,000 Jews from Budapest. Nearly 10,000 French refugee children from the Mulhouse region had recently been received in Switzerland.3/

Currency Controls Relaxed for Evacuees. In February 1945 the Treasury Department, the Department of State, and the Board jointly took up currency controls as they affected refugees surrendering United States dollar currency upon their entry into

1/ Cable No. 1593 to London dated March 2, 1945; see also Dispatch No. 21635 from London dated March 12, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 240 to Bern dated January 16, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 531 from Bern dated January 25, 1945.

Switzerland. In view of and solely because of the humanitarian considerations involved, the United States Legation in Bern was informed that the Treasury Department was prepared, until further notice, to countenance the purchase by a designated Swiss bank, under specified conditions, of amounts up to \$100 per person per month. The Legation was requested to so inform the Swiss unless the United States Embassy in London, which was advised of this decision and requested to cable its comments or agreements to Bern, felt that for any reason the proposed procedure was objectionable in any way.1/

Large-Scale Movements Anticipated. In February 1945 the conviction had grown that a progressive increase could be expected in the number of Jewish refugees released from Germany and German-controlled areas. Practical factors pointing to this conclusion included the difficulties anticipated for the Germans as a result of a reported lack of food for Jewish internees and the probable need of Jewish internment camps for housing German refugees from Soviet-occupied areas. On the theoretical side, expression had been given to the possible existence of a desire on the part of German officials to gain credit for releasing Jewish internees, as well as a wish to avoid embarrassment to the local population which might result from the presence of any additional Jewish internment camps in Germany proper such as those already discovered by advancing Allied troops, with their irrefutable evidence of mass exterminations.2/

In view of intimations that additional transports were to follow the refugee group from Theresienstadt, the Board had asked Representative McClelland early in February to indicate whether in his judgment there appeared to be an imminent possibility that German authorities, under the pressure of growing overcrowding in Germany resulting from the flow of refugees from the east, might present increasing numbers of refugees at the Swiss border for admission. While it was assumed that, if such arrivals took place in an orderly manner and in reasonable numbers at one time, the Swiss Government would be willing to accept them, it was anticipated that both supplies and assistance in removing corresponding numbers of refugees already there might be requested by the Swiss should the flow become substantial. The Board accordingly suggested to Representative McClelland the desirability of initiating

1/ Cable No. 886 to Bern dated February 28, 1945, comprising document 87.

2/ Cable No. 1457 from London dated February 10, 1945.

appropriate discussions with a view to determining and organizing the action to be taken in the event that the indicated possibilities materialized.1/

Broad Rescue and Relief Program Undertaken. Information available to the Board later in February indicated that, while the Germans had apparently abandoned the wholesale extermination of detainees, large numbers of the physically unfit were in imminent danger of death due to starvation, exposure, and deliberate neglect. While no information was available as to the exact number of persons involved, it was felt that food, medicines, and clothing would have to be distributed at once to thousands of such detainees if their lives were to be saved.2/ The Board therefore undertook a broad program using Switzerland as the base, including (1) furnishing food and other relief through the International Red Cross to physically unfit unassimilated detainees within enemy-controlled territory, and (2) their removal by the International Red Cross to safety in Switzerland if at all possible.

Board Representative McClelland was asked to explore at once the availability in Switzerland of food and other relief supplies as well as transportation equipment and to advise the Board whether relief trucks were permitted to move from Switzerland to German-controlled areas and back to Switzerland for the reloading of supplies. He was also asked to approach the International Red Cross with a view to obtaining their consent to deliver the relief supplies in enemy territory and to organize and effectuate the removal of detainees to Switzerland.

Representative McClelland was further instructed to consult the Currie Mission and, if the latter concurred, to approach the Swiss Government for the purpose of obtaining its consent (1) to make available to the International Red Cross the necessary supplies and equipment for the proposed relief and evacuation program, and (2) to admit all detainees reaching Swiss borders and to house and maintain them under guard until the Board should be able to arrange for their evacuation to Allied territory. The Swiss were to be assured that this Government would arrange for the replenishment from the outside of all supplies made available by the Swiss for this purpose, as well as compensation for the use of any equipment.3/

1/ Cable No. 624 to Bern dated February 9, 1945.

2/ See also Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

3/ Cable No. 819 to Bern dated February 23, 1945, comprising document 88.

Board Representative Katzki, who had recently returned to Washington from Ankara, was dispatched to Switzerland in March to assist Representative McClelland in developing the proposed program. Details of the program were also cabled to Representative Mann in London, who was instructed to proceed to Paris to work out with Representative McClelland and Katzki certain problems incidental to the execution of the program, particularly the details of acquiring necessary trucking equipment and supplies which the United States Army had agreed to release to the Board.1/

Early in March Board Representative McClelland reported that the International Red Cross had been informed by the German Government of its agreement to permit the departure from Germany of certain categories of detainees unsuited for labor, namely, elderly people (over 65) of both sexes, women, and children.2/ A report which reached the Board from a private source similarly indicated that Germany had agreed in principle to "repatriate" certain categories of unemployed civilian populations. Toward this end the Board proposed that trucks available to the International Red Cross for delivery of prisoner-of-war parcels be used on their return trips to Switzerland for the evacuation of such detainees.3/

On April 12 the International Red Cross informed Board Representative McClelland that after several weeks of negotiating with the Germans on the matter of evacuating such detainees, and despite previous indications, the Germans appeared willing to permit the departure of no civilian detainees other than those of French and Belgian nationality, and in these cases only in exchange for similar groups of German civilians being held by the French and Belgians. One convoy of 300 French women had by that time already been evacuated by the International Red Cross by truck from the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck, having been exchanged for some 490 German civilians taken in Alsace. An S.S. spokesman was said to have informed the International Red Cross delegate accompanying the trucks that all the French women remaining in this camp might be evacuated as soon as the International Red Cross wished.

According to reports from women evacuated in the first convoy, the Nazis were pursuing a policy of simply working the detainees at Ravensbrueck to death. When they were no longer able to work, the persons interned were literally discarded. The Board felt that there was every reason to believe that this policy on the part of the Nazis was being applied in the case of similar groups of civilian detainees in other German concentration camps.

1/ Cables No. 1935 and 2135 to London dated March 13 and March 21, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 1481 from Bern dated March 8, 1945, comprising document 89.

3/ Cable No. 1092 to Bern dated March 16, 1945.



As a result of these reports, the International Red Cross immediately undertook to obtain buses from the Swiss army to supplement the limited number of prisoner-of-war parcels trucks available for such evacuations.1/ By April 30, when the Swiss army placed 60 postal buses at the disposal of the International Red Cross, the swiftness of military developments had foreclosed further evacuation possibilities.2/

In the meantime, other women from Ravensbrueck were evacuated to Sweden.3/

Other Refugees Arrive. On April 19 Board Representative McClelland reported that a small group of 69 Jewish refugees, apparently mainly from Bratislava, had reached Switzerland.4/

The last rescues effected under the two-way relief and evacuation program were from the concentration camp at Mauthausen bei Linz. Two columns of trucks comprising 28 vehicles reached Switzerland on April 23 and 24 and a third convoy of 14 trucks arrived on April 25 bringing a total of 781 detainees, most of them women of French, Belgian, and Dutch nationalities. The rescued deportees reported frightful conditions prevailing in Mauthausen, where the most brutal type of extermination was in progress. A fourth and final convoy of 13 prisoner-of-war trucks crossed the Swiss border on April 30 with some 300 persons, mainly French women, after a long and difficult trip from Mauthausen in the course of which 10 persons died.5/

The evacuation of a total of only about 1,400 detainees from the camps of Ravensbrueck and Mauthausen by returning trucks during the month of April was attributed by Representative McClelland mainly to the fact that trucks were a most inadequate means of transporting over long distances and secondary roads men and women in wretched physical condition from prolonged mistreatment and starvation.6/

- 1/ Cable No. 2175 from Bern dated April 13, 1945, comprising document 90; see also Cable No. 2130 from Bern dated April 11, 1945.
- 2/ Cable No. 2562 from Bern dated May 2, 1945.
- 3/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.
- 4/ Cable No. 2290 from Bern dated April 19, 1945, comprising document 91.
- 5/ Cables No. 2425, 2468, 2562, and 2620 from Bern dated April 25 and 27 and May 2 and 4, 1945.
- 6/ Report on the Activities of the War Refugee Board through its Representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, enclosed with letter from Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated August 2, 1945.

The fruit borne of the long efforts to obtain permission from the Germans for the stationing of International Red Cross delegates in concentration camps 1/ was dramatically illustrated in the final phases of liberation. In one instance alone, at Mauthausen, several thousand lives were saved by the presence at the camp of a Red Cross representative whose courageous intercession at the critical moment of the Nazi breakdown prevented the prisoners there from being buried alive in an underground airplane factory, where the S.S. commander had received instructions to trap the internees by blowing up the exits and ventilation shafts. 2/

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- 1/ See Relief Programs: Efforts To Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians and Board's Food Parcels Program.
- 2/ Report on the Activities of the War Refugee Board through its Representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, enclosed with letter from Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated August 2, 1945.

II C. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH SWEDEN

As in the case of Switzerland, it was clear from the outset that a center of operations in Sweden was extremely important to the fulfillment of the Board's task. With the adjoining occupied countries of Finland on its east, Norway and Denmark on its west, and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany itself to the east and south across the Baltic Sea, neutral Sweden was accessible to persons fleeing from the Nazis and strategically valuable for relief traffic in the opposite direction. The sympathy of the Swedish public for oppressed peoples was reflected in the attitude of Swedish officials, and Sweden had already made a distinguished record in the field of humanitarian endeavor.

Sweden too constituted a channel for the transmission of funds necessary for rescue and relief operations, and private agencies active in the refugee relief field were well represented there. In the course of the Board's operations, remittances totaling more than \$700,000 from private sources in this country to Sweden to finance relief and rescue operations in enemy territory were licensed by the Treasury Department, in addition to the thousands of dollars expended by the Board itself. Thousands of food parcels purchased in this country were shipped to Gothenburg, Sweden, and redispached from there by the International Red Cross to persons held in German concentration camps. 1/

With a view to accelerating the evacuation to Sweden of threatened persons from Norway, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states, Minister Johnson was asked to approach the Swedish Government, explain the war refugee policy of this Government, and solicit the active cooperation of Sweden in promoting the rescue and relief of victims of Axis persecutions. 2/

Preliminary Reports Received. Shortly thereafter reports were received from Stockholm setting forth what Sweden had been doing

1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

2/ Cable No. 131 to Stockholm dated January 25, 1944; the instructions cabled Minister Johnson were similar to those dispatched to Ambassador Winant in London, which appear as document 5. -

with respect to refugees from Norway, Denmark, and other countries. Following German rejection of official Swedish offers to provide refuge for Danish and Norwegian Jews, Minister Johnson indicated, thousands of persons had been able to escape the Nazi terror in the early days of the war as a result of the liberal attitude of the Swedish Government in admitting persons who reached Swedish soil on their own initiative. Among those who succeeded in reaching Sweden by February 1944 were an estimated 18,000 Norwegians, 14,000 Danes, and 3,500 German-speaking refugees, along with others from Poland, the Netherlands, and the Baltic states. All full Jews in Denmark were thought to have escaped to Sweden except for an estimated 1,200 deported by the Nazis in the early stages of German occupation. 1/ Many of these refugees in Sweden were maintained in refugee camps partially financed by the Swedish Government.

Later reports from two private organizations in Sweden concerning the situation of Jews and stateless refugees in that country were transmitted to the Board in April 1944. According to these reports, little anti-Semitism existed in Sweden, although the Jewish population had trebled in the past few years, and many refugees had been able to obtain employment there. The Swedish Government was described as having "constantly shown great understanding and given extensive cooperation" to private Jewish relief societies. 2/

Special Representative Named. In March 1944 Iver C. Olsen, Financial Attaché at the United States Legation in Stockholm, was named Special Representative of the Board in Sweden and served in this capacity throughout the Board's existence. 3/

Board funds totaling approximately \$200,000 were made available to Representative Olsen for expenditure at his discretion in connection with rescue operations which he undertook. In addition the utilization of most of the money remitted to Sweden by private organizations was under his supervision. The operations which Representative Olsen conducted with the funds supplied by the Board

1/ Cables No. 480, 481, and 503 from Stockholm dated February 13, 13, and 15, 1944, respectively; see also Dispatch No. 3223 from Stockholm dated April 24, 1944, and Cable No. 498 from Stockholm dated February 9, 1945.

2/ Dispatch No. 3223 from Stockholm dated April 24, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 527 to Stockholm dated March 28, 1944; the instructions cabled Representative Olsen were similar to those sent Board Representative Hirschmann, which appear as document 3. See also Cable No. 1126 from Stockholm dated April 3, 1944. When Representative Olsen was recalled to Washington by the Treasury Department in November 1944 he made a personal report to the Board before his return to Stockholm.



were directed almost wholly to evacuations to Sweden, while the private agency programs which he supervised usually combined rescue and relief measures.

Evacuation of Children to Sweden Proposed. In March 1944 the Board received a report from a private source in London which asserted that the Swedish Government had indicated its willingness to approach Axis and satellite governments for the release to Sweden of up to 20,000 refugee children of all nationalities, provided guarantees were forthcoming for the eventual evacuation of the children from Sweden. 1/ Although the Swedish Government had previously been urged to make a public appeal to Germany to permit refugee children to come to Sweden from Poland, it had not taken such action, primarily because of its conviction that Germany would reject any such request, but also because it felt that any such public appeal might prejudice the chances of still other refugees to escape unnoticed. 2/

In view of the report from London suggesting that circumstances appeared favorable for encouraging Sweden to take such action, the Board cabled Minister Johnson, asking that he approach the Swedish Government and point out that such an appeal would no longer prejudice the possibility of refugees escaping unnoticed, since the mass evacuation of refugees from Denmark by organized Danish patrols had by then been completed. The Board indicated that it would undertake to meet Swedish requests concerning the eventual evacuation of the children from Sweden, the delivery of additional foodstuffs for their maintenance while in Sweden, and financial assistance in their maintenance while there. 3/

Later in April 1944 Minister Johnson learned that the Swedish Government had privately appealed to the Germans many times during the previous year to permit refugee children to proceed to Sweden. For a while it appeared that arrangements could be made for the evacuation of large numbers of Belgian and French children but the Germans at the last moment stopped the proceedings on the ground that transportation facilities for the evacuation of the children could not be spared. Swedish authorities indicated, however, that they would not overlook any opportunity to continue their appeal to the Germans in this matter. 4/

Red Cross Urged To Intercede. Early in July 1944 at the Board's request, a joint British-American approach was made to the International Committee of the Red Cross to communicate to the German

1/ Cable No. 2162 from London dated March 16, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 480 from Stockholm dated February 13, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 654 to Stockholm dated April 12, 1944, comprising document 92.

4/ Cable No. 1342 from Stockholm dated April 18, 1944, comprising document 93.

Government the fact that Sweden was willing to accept refugee children from any part of German-controlled Europe, irrespective of their race. 1/ The International Red Cross made the suggested representations to the Germans but no affirmative reply was ever received. 2/

Evacuations from Finland. Shortly after the Board was set up, the United States Legation in Helsinki had been asked to forward the latest available figures concerning refugees in Finland, as well as information with respect to the treatment accorded such refugees. 3/

Chargé d'Affaires Gullion replied that there were some 6,000 refugees in Finland at that time, most of whom were Estonians. Among the refugees who had fled to Finland there were some 130 Jews. With respect to the possibility that Finland might implement the rescue and relief efforts of the Board, it was obvious that any such cooperation would present special problems because of the presence of German troops in the country. Endangered persons fleeing to Finland had not been forbidden entrance, but Finland was doing nothing to encourage or cooperate in such rescues. While Chargé d'Affaires Gullion indicated that there apparently was no official discrimination against refugees or Jews in Finland at that time, there had been instances of discrimination and abuse during the first enthusiasm of Finnish cooperation with Germany after 1941 as well as under the régime of at least one Naziphile official.

Although Finland was apparently the only country fighting with Germany that had resisted the introduction of anti-Jewish measures, 4/ there was reason to believe that serious persecution would result not only to Jewish refugees but also to Finland's own 1,500 Jews and to many non-Jewish refugees from German-occupied countries who would be equally threatened as a result of increasing German influence in Finland. In this connection Chargé Gullion proposed that the Board might well attack a concrete and immediate problem that had presented itself in the case of some 100 Jewish refugees who had gone to Finland from Central Europe in 1938 and 1939 and whom the Jewish community of Finland was anxious to evacuate to Stockholm. 5/

Despite requests subsequently made by Minister Johnson in Stockholm at the instigation of the Board, and despite the fact that the Finnish Government itself had requested the admission of

- 1/ Cables No. 2198 and 2351 to Bern dated June 28 and July 8, 1944, and Cables No. 4304 and 4421 from Bern dated July 6 and 11, 1944.
- 2/ Airgram No. A-1368 from London dated November 15, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 48 to Helsinki dated March 4, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 399 from Helsinki dated May 16, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 303 from Helsinki dated April 3, 1944.

these refugees to Sweden, the Swedish Government at first refused to permit their entry. 1/

Evacuation of Central European Refugees in Finland Accomplished. Minister Johnson subsequently succeeded in persuading the Swedish Foreign Office to re-examine the case, indicating that the Board would make arrangements for the evacuation from Sweden, as soon as practicable, of all threatened persons other than Swedes who might be accorded refuge in Sweden, as well as for the maintenance while in Sweden of those refugees who could not claim the support of their own governments. 2/ As a result, Swedish visas were authorized for 100 of the Central European refugees then in Finland "as a starter," though the Swedish Foreign Office, in agreeing to issue these visas, stated that the action was being undertaken for humanitarian reasons since the refugees concerned were panicky, and not because the Swedish Government felt that they were in any immediate danger. 3/ These refugees all reached Sweden early in June 1944.

Other Evacuations from Finland. The Swedish Foreign Office later agreed to issue visas to some 60 Central European Jews remaining in Finland, for the most part unemployables of German, Polish, Lithuanian, and Rumanian origin, on condition that assurances be given as to the maintenance of this group in Sweden. 4/ The necessary assurances were promptly given by the Board 5/ and arrangements were made for this group of refugees to be evacuated to Sweden by means of the "Birger Jarl," the Swedish vessel that was to carry American and other Allied groups from Finland. Advance arrangements for appropriate living quarters for the group were undertaken by Board Representative Olsen through the Swedish Red Cross and local Jewish organizations. 6/

Only one Jewish refugee appeared before the "Birger Jarl's" departure, however, despite the prediction on the part of one member of the Finnish Jewish community that a substantial number of refugees would take advantage of the evacuation facilities offered.

Chargé Gullion indicated that, since the whole evacuation was a

- 1/ Cable No. 908 from Stockholm dated March 16, 1944, comprising document 94.
- 2/ Cable No. 1235 from Stockholm dated April 11, 1944; and Cable No. 749 to Stockholm dated April 25, 1944, comprising document 95.
- 3/ Cable No. 1379 from Stockholm dated April 21, 1944, comprising document 96.
- 4/ Cables No. 2100, 2371, and 2388 from Stockholm dated June 12, 29, and 30, 1944, respectively.
- 5/ Cable No. 1301 to Stockholm dated June 30, 1944, comprising document 97.
- 6/ Cable No. 2404 from Stockholm dated July 1, 1944.

last-minute effort, it had undoubtedly been difficult for the individuals concerned to make final plans. To this explanation Representative Olsen added the observation that extreme apathy on the part of the Jewish community of Stockholm may have discouraged the Helsinki group. 1/

The evacuation of stateless Jews from Finland to Sweden nevertheless proceeded slowly by means of vessels other than the "Birger Jarl." At one point Representative Olsen stated that there were approximately 300 aged or ill Finnish Jews who probably could get permission to go to Sweden on the basis of an invitation from the Swedish Mosaic community, including offers of homes and full medical care. Such an unofficial approach on friendly and humanitarian grounds was believed to be the only successful basis of securing Finnish permission for such evacuations, since any official approaches would imply that Finnish Jews were in jeopardy and would consequently be resented. Aside from a few Jewish children of Finnish nationality who might get permission to go to Sweden, some with their mothers, it was thought that steps to evacuate to Sweden the remaining 1,500 Jews in Finland would be impossible at that time. 2/

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Arrangements were subsequently made by the Board with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee whereby the latter assumed responsibility for the expenses involved in evacuating and maintaining in Sweden Jewish refugees from Finland. 3/

Rescue and Relief of Polish Refugees from Sweden. Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen had several discussions with the Polish Minister in Stockholm concerning the difficulties encountered in providing adequate relief to some 500 Polish refugees there. Financial support from the Polish Government-in-Exile in London and from charitable Swedish organizations was so limited that it had been necessary to borrow locally approximately half of the funds required, with the hope that the Government-in-Exile would assume the obligations incurred.

With the help of certain Norwegian organizations, additional Polish refugees were reaching Sweden from Norway every week. According to the Polish Legation, there were still some 6,000 Poles in Norway as compulsory workers or prisoners of war, fairly large numbers of whom could be brought to Sweden if funds were available for their evacuation and maintenance. Approximately 300 Polish refugees then in Finland were also thought to be in immediate danger

1/ Cables No. 2457 and 2499 from Stockholm dated July 5 and 6, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2570 from Stockholm dated July 11, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1368 to Stockholm dated July 11, 1944.



and could presumably be evacuated to Sweden. Minister Johnson and Representative Olsen suggested that the Board investigate whether or not an organization could be found which would contribute to a general program of assisting Polish refugees there and to further the rescue of additional Poles from Poland, Norway, and other occupied territory. 1/

Following the receipt of this recommendation the Board discussed the matter with Polish War Relief and the President's War Relief Control Board. Arrangements were eventually made for \$25,000 to be sent to Stockholm and expended under Representative Olsen's direction. 2/

Information obtained from private sources concerning the condition in which the remaining Jews in liberated Poland were found was forwarded to the Board by the United States Embassy in Moscow in December 1944. 3/ The number of Jews remaining in liberated Poland was estimated at only 8,000. These were described as in a "pitiful moral state" with no confidence in themselves or in established authority and unwilling to assert even the most elementary rights. They were, however, finding employment without difficulty, although there was said to be considerable anti-Semitism. The need for clothing and medicine was reported to exceed the need for food, and the plight of the orphan children was particularly distressing.

Evacuations from the Baltic States. Information reaching the Board from Stockholm in April 1944 indicated that Swedish authorities apparently placed no obstacles in the way of Estonian fishing craft engaged in rescuing refugees from Estonia and transporting them to Sweden. There were other indications that the flow of persons endangered by German occupation of Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, as well as of Estonia, might be considerably expanded if sufficient funds were made available and suitable boats obtained. Board Representative Olsen estimated that some 600 or 700 intellectual, racial, and political refugees might thus be rescued from each of the Baltic states. Swedish officials, he indicated, knew of and would facilitate these operations. 4/

Upon canvassing the situation, the Board could find no private organization to supply funds for the proposed evacuations. The situation in Hungary at that time had given rise to heavy demands

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- 1/ Cable No. 2569 from Stockholm dated July 11, 1944; see also Cable No. 2668 from Stockholm dated July 18, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1818 to Stockholm dated September 12, 1944. See also Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: Other United States Agencies (War Relief Control Board).
- 3/ Cable No. 5059 from Moscow dated December 30, 1944.
- 4/ Cables No. 1512, 1738, and 1820 from Stockholm dated April 29, May 16, and May 22, 1944.

on American Jewish organizations, and it appeared that there were no organizations of Lithuanians, Latvians, or Estonians in this country able to finance such operations.

It therefore became necessary for the Board itself to make funds available to Representative Olsen if a test was to be made of the practicability of the projected evacuations. Arrangements were thus made for the transfer of \$50,000 of Board funds to Stockholm for Representative Olsen's use in this connection. 1/ In August 1944 the Board underwrote these operations to the extent of another \$50,000, this amount having been made available out of funds previously sent to Ankara. 2/ Upon the Board's recommendation, the remittance of \$10,000 to Stockholm by the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee was also authorized by the Treasury to be used for similar operations, primarily Lithuanian, under Representative Olsen's supervision. 3/

These Baltic operations, which got under way in June 1944, resulted in the direct rescue of approximately 1,200 persons, and at least as many more were brought to safety in Sweden through individual initiative and facilities benefiting from underground routes and communications established by the Board.

It was possible to recruit for the Estonian rescues competent and skillful operators with excellent equipment and effective underground channels in Estonia. Two very fast boats were used in this traffic, one an open speedboat, the other a cabin cruiser with a capacity for about 30 passengers, and both vessels made several trips without any fatalities, although the cabin cruiser was fired upon several times by German submarines and surface craft, which, however, were unable to overtake her. During the course of these operations approximately 275 persons were rescued, about half of them women and children and a number of them fugitives from German labor and military conscription who had been hiding in the forests near the sea.

The Latvian operations were considerably more difficult and encountered bad storms at sea and narrow escapes from German naval and military action. For a brief period in August 1944 rescues were greatly facilitated by German confusion and demoralization, but when German patrol vessels were increased and controls became tighter in early September, one of the rescue vessels was captured and its crew and passengers taken to Tallinn and imprisoned. Some of them escaped later during the Russian drive on Tallinn and brought the boat to Sweden with 35 refugees, but the crew and 50

- 1/ Cables No. 1000 and 1113 to Stockholm dated May 24 and June 5, 1944; see also Cable No. 2037 from Stockholm dated June 7, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1313 from Ankara dated July 19, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 1150 to Stockholm dated June 8, 1944.

refugee passengers of another boat taken by the Germans a few days after the first capture were not so fortunate. They were taken to Gdynia and from there sent to a concentration camp in Germany. Of a total crew of 24 used in these operations, one-third were dead or missing when the operations ended. Notwithstanding these difficulties, about 700 Latvian refugees were brought to Sweden through the facilities of the Board, more than half of them women and children. Several times that number, although not evacuated directly through Board facilities, were said to owe their safety to the Board since they escaped only after the pioneer work of establishing escape routes and lines of communication had been done.

The hazards involved in evacuations from enemy territory were tragically illustrated in the case of the Lithuanian operations, which were the most costly and the least productive of the Board's Baltic rescue programs. Fewer than 150 Lithuanians were enabled to reach Sweden, and five rescue vessels were lost to German submarines and surface craft, with a total of 250 refugee passengers and crew members dead or missing. Representative Olsen's key man in the Lithuanian operations, who had himself gone to Lithuania to arrange underground connections and work out the projected evacuations, did not return; he was reportedly captured and executed by the Germans.<sup>1/</sup>

Among those rescued in these Baltic operations none was Jewish. The outstanding failure of the Estonian program was the inability to evacuate some 300 Czech and French women from Tallinn; several attempts were made to contact them, but they were reportedly too frightened to risk the journey. Representative Olsen regarded as reasonable the explanation that the Jews in Latvia were either out of reach of rescue operations or were in hiding and too terrified to make a break for safety. According to the reports of the Lithuanians reaching Sweden, the Jews in Lithuania were likewise too terrified to leave their hideouts, apparently fearing that rescue schemes were a German trap to lure them out of hiding or that the escape route was fraught with dangers greater than those faced in hiding. <sup>2/</sup>

Baltic Operations Discontinued. The losses incurred in these operations, particularly in the case of the Lithuanian activities where all of the boats were lost, became increasingly disproportionate to the number of persons rescued. Communications had long been uncertain, but operations became so dangerous that they were terminated toward the last of September 1944. The boats which had been used for evacuating endangered persons from Estonia and Latvia were subsequently transferred to the Norwegian rescue operations.

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 3046 from Stockholm dated August 11, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Report from Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director Pehle on Operations of the War Refugee Board from Sweden dated November 20, 1944.

The decision to terminate these operations in the Baltic states was due in part to the military situation there and in part to their relative unproductivity. Another compelling factor was the difficulty of controlling the types of people to be brought out. In Latvia the Germans reportedly considered their position so hopeless that they were assisting their Latvian collaborators to escape. Moreover, there were literally hundreds of thousands of people of all political leanings in the Baltic coastal areas, all making panic-stricken efforts to escape. The last boat sent to Estonia, Representative Olsen reported, was almost capsized by scores of people swimming around in the sea trying to climb aboard. 1/

With Soviet occupation of the entire Baltic area imminent, the Board had no desire to assist in the escape of individuals who might have been collaborators with the Nazis or of persons fleeing from one of this Government's Allies. At one point in the Baltic operations a Communist newspaper in Sweden had, in fact, alleged that the United States Legation in Stockholm had aided in the evacuation of pro-Fascist and anti-Soviet elements from the Baltic states.2/ This accusation, repeated in the Moscow press 3/, was described by Minister Johnson in a report to the State Department as "untrue, speculative and provocative." 4/

For some time the Government of Sweden had been aiding in the removal to Sweden of Swedish-speaking elements from Estonia and Latvia, in many instances with German approval. 5/ Many thousands of persons from the Baltic countries had sought refuge in Sweden following German military defeats in that area, but precautions had been observed by the Board against evacuating persons other than victims of Axis oppression. A final report made by Minister Johnson on the Baltic evacuations confirmed the fact that all of the individuals removed to Sweden from the Baltic countries through Board facilities were refugees from German persecution, although there may have been among them persons harboring anti-Russian feelings. 6/

- 1/ Cable No. 3955 from Stockholm dated September 29, 1944, comprising document 98.
- 2/ Cable No. 4219 from Stockholm dated October 17, 1944; see also Cables No. 4235, 4323, and 4339 from Stockholm dated October 18, 24, and 25, 1944, respectively.
- 3/ Cables No. 4019 and 4020 from Moscow dated October 20 and 21, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 4314 from Stockholm dated October 23, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 3006 from Stockholm dated August 8, 1944; see also Dispatch No. 4369 from Stockholm dated October 25, 1944.
- 6/ Cable No. 4314 from Stockholm dated October 23, 1944.



As a further safeguard against charges that this Government was in any way aiding in the escape or maintenance in Sweden of anti-Soviet elements, arrangements were made whereby all applications received by Foreign Funds Control in the Treasury Department concerning relief to Baltic refugees in and through Sweden would be cleared with the Board before such application were acted upon.1/

Toward the end of October 1944 the Swedish Government closed all Baltic refugee camps in Sweden for the purpose of conducting a political investigation among those being housed in the camps.2/ Individuals considered to be quislings were later segregated.

Evacuations from Norway. Activities in Norway were favored greatly by border proximity and adjoining sea areas and were benefited by extremely effective underground channels and an abundance of highly skilled technicians available to carry out almost any type of operation desired. There were literally hundreds of small individual groups, representative of labor organizations, Home Front units, students, political factions, et cetera, engaged in a wide variety of underground activities. "Even the Norwegian pastors," Representative Olsen reported, were "operating a lively underground with great skill--shading, if necessary, certain aspects of the Ten Commandments."3/

One of the most successful projects undertaken from Sweden was an American Labor-sponsored program of rescue and relief in Norway. Upon learning of the work being done by a Norwegian labor group, the Board in April 1944 worked out with American Relief for Norway, Inc.; the National Congress of Industrial Organizations War Relief Committee; the Labor League for Human Rights, United Nations Relief of the American Federation of Labor; and the Norwegian Government-in-Exile a program for rescue and relief operations in Norway. Funds were obtained for this purpose by special appropriation from the National War Fund and remittances totaling \$400,000 were sent to Sweden to finance these operations.4/ When these funds were nearly exhausted, Board Representative Olsen strongly recommended that arrangements be made to continue the financing of these operations in view of the increasingly critical situation in Norway, where more and more persons were being forced into hiding because they were hunted by the Gestapo. The Board gave every assistance to the efforts of the interested private groups to obtain additional funds from the National War Fund to finance the program, and in the meantime it arranged to make avail-

1/ Memorandum to the Director of Foreign Funds Control dated November 8, 1944.

2/ Airgram No. A-912 from Stockholm dated October 24, 1944.

3/ Report from Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director Pehle on Operations of the War Refugee Board from Sweden dated November 20, 1944.

4/ Cables No. 619, 1869, and 51 to Stockholm dated April 8 and September 18, 1944, and January 9, 1945, respectively. See also Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: Other United States Agencies (War Relief Control Board).

able to Representative Olsen for the immediate needs of this and other projects certain confidential Board funds totaling \$98,500 which had previously been placed at the disposal of Board Representative Hirschmann in Ankara. 1/ \$50,000 of this amount was contributed to the Norwegian labor project. 2/

This program moved smoothly and efficiently, and the extremely good results obtained were due in no small part to the unofficial but most effective cooperation of the Swedish authorities. The underground channels established for rescue operations were, except for normal hazards, comparatively safe and casualties were light. Since reprisals by the Nazis were extremely severe, a large proportion of those rescued were complete families. Between June and December 1944, more than 6,000 persons were evacuated to Sweden. 3/ By January 1945 suitable vessels for accomplishing organized evacuations had become available, and arrangements were effected with Swedish authorities to expand the sea escape routes. During the first four months of 1945 an estimated 4,500 refugees were brought to Sweden from Norway. 4/

Relief activities were similar to the rescue operations in that they were varied and entirely successful. Adequate safeguards were taken to assure that relief was brought to the most needy cases and that none of the supplies fell into the hands of the Germans. Large numbers of relief parcels containing food, clothing, and shoes purchased in Sweden were regularly sent into Norway under Swedish license. Substantial additional quantities of similar supplies were sent in through the underground for the relief of severe hardship cases, including the families of persons in concentration camps, and to maintain the underground operators engaged in transporting refugees across the border into Sweden. Supplies forwarded through the underground also helped to support approximately 10,000 Norwegian youths and students who failed to respond to the Nazi labor mobilization and were hiding in the Norwegian forests.

- 1/ Cable No. 311 to Ankara and Cable No. 486 to Stockholm, both dated March 15, 1945.
- 2/ Cable No. 955 to Stockholm dated May 24, 1945.
- 3/ Cables No. 2652, 3199, 3864, 4348, 4620, 5167, and 463 from Stockholm dated July 17, August 19, September 25, October 25, November 11, and December 18, 1944, and February 7, 1945, respectively, comprising documents 99 through 105. See also letter and enclosure from Board Representative Olsen in Stockholm dated December 18, 1944.
- 4/ Cables No. 781, 1298, and 1490 from Stockholm dated February 28, April 7, and April 21, 1945, respectively, comprising documents 106 through 108; and reports from Lars Evensen to Representative Olsen dated May 25 and June 8, 1945, comprising documents 109 and 110.

Periodic reports were prepared by the Norwegian labor groups through which these rescue and relief activities were accomplished and were forwarded by Representative Olsen to the Board, which made them available to the private agencies involved. After the cessation of hostilities, the National War Fund asked the Board to obtain information concerning specific needs for a follow-up program proposed by these agencies for relief in liberated Norway. Board Representative Olsen discussed the matter with the Norwegian groups and cabled the details of a five-point program which they advanced for the post-war relief of the more severely distressed categories. 1/

Second Norwegian Program Launched. After the labor group operations had begun, the Board was advised that lack of funds was the main obstacle to an expanded program of evacuations to Sweden, as well as more effective relief work within Norway. 2/ Channels other than those available to the labor groups could be utilized in this connection, Representative Olsen pointed out. 3/ Cited as outstandingly distressed groups were the families of persons in Norwegian concentration camps, the families of Norwegians who had been deported to Germany, and the families of clergymen, members of the Supreme Court, and other intellectuals who had been interned by the Nazis.

The cooperation of certain Swedish officials was enlisted in strictest confidence in this connection, and plans were made to carry on, through responsible and skillful channels, certain additional Norwegian operations that were to prove unusually effective. Arrangements were made by the Board for these operations to be underwritten by American Relief for Norway. Allocations were obtained from the National War Fund, and remittances to Board Representative Olsen aggregating \$120,000 were authorized by the Treasury for this second Norwegian program. 4/

Three channels were utilized in this expanded program. With the help of the Swedish Consul General in Oslo, working through the Central Relief Committee of the Lutheran Church, relief was afforded to a carefully selected list of needy cases, including particularly the families of men who had been deported, imprisoned, or shot by the Germans. The entire operation was illegal and extremely dangerous because of the severe penalties imposed by the

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1/ Cable No. 1953 from Stockholm dated May 29, 1945, comprising document 111.

2/ Cable No. 1772 from Stockholm dated May 19, 1944, comprising document 112.

3/ Cable No. 1926 from Stockholm dated May 31, 1944.

4/ Cables No. 1313, 1502, 1576, 1817, 2128, 2310, and 186 to Stockholm dated July 1, July 28, August 8, September 12, October 23, and November 16, 1944, and February 2, 1945.

Germans upon anyone assisting persons in these groups. Other funds made available to certain officials of the Norwegian Legation in Stockholm were used to supply urgently needed medicines, clothing, equipment, and food to Norwegian Home Front groups for a project related to the safeguarding of the Norwegian youths and students hiding in the forests and for the maintenance of facilities for their rescue should their lives become endangered. Pastors of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Sweden were supplied with funds for a dual program, the first part involving arrangements for more or less penniless Norwegian refugees in Sweden to send food parcels back to relatives in Norway, the second part consisting of operations for transmitting Norwegian kroner into Norway through the underground for the relief of persons in the more isolated Norwegian parishes. 1/

In November 1944 the Board received reports from Stockholm concerning the appalling situation of the Norwegian civil population, particularly that north of Narvik. The Germans as they moved southward had followed a scorched-earth policy, destroying everything in the northern regions, and thousands of Norwegians faced starvation. The situation was so desperate that the Swedish Government had approached the Germans for permission to evacuate sick and aged women and children to Sweden. 2/ American Relief for Norway funds were placed at the disposal of competent groups to help in relieving the desperate situation in the northern districts.

In April 1945 the Board facilitated arrangements for the remittance of \$1,000 to Sweden by the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief, to be used for the relief of Norwegian Methodists in Northern Norway. 3/

Operations in Hungary and the Balkans. As a result of the willingness of the Swedish Foreign Office to assign an attache to its Legation in Budapest for the exclusive purpose of undertaking action in behalf of Hungarian Jews, a very constructive program of operations in Hungary was initiated from Sweden. 4/ Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish businessman possessed of great energy and resourcefulness and sincerely concerned with the urgency of the problem, was chosen for the post. When the desperate nature of the situation of Jews in Hungary became apparent, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was licensed to send \$100,000 to Sweden, and this money was made available by Representative Olsen to Mr. Wallenberg for rescue and relief operations in Hungary.

1/ Cable No. 4548 from Stockholm dated November 7, 1944, comprising document 113.

2/ Cables No. 4746 and 4800 from Stockholm dated November 20 and 22, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 627 to Stockholm dated April 5, 1945.

4/ See Rescue from Hungary.



Representative Olsen paid high tribute to the work done by Mr. Wallenberg and his associates. In his final report to the Board he stated: "Sufficient facts now appear at hand to support the conclusion that Hungarian rescue and relief actions initiated by the War Refugee Board from Sweden were the keystones of the most productive steps taken in that area, and paved the way for saving the lives of perhaps 100,000 Jews. The work of Raoul Wallenberg, actively supported by Minister Daniellson and his staff of the Swedish Legation in Budapest, was nothing short of brilliant--to say nothing of being highly courageous. This group pioneered the program of constant and relentlessly increasing pressure on the Hungarian Government in behalf of the Jews, at the cost of seriously jeopardizing their own personal safety. Minister Daniellson informed Minister Johnson . . . that during their last weeks as officials in Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg had to hide in a different house every night, he was so hotly hunted by the Hungarian Fascists and the Germans. The program of issuing Swedish protective passports, of sheltering Jews in Swedish protected dwellings, and similar other activities in itself brought approximately 20,000 Jews under the safety of Swedish protection . . . This program set a pattern which soon was followed by the Swiss, Portuguese and the International Red Cross, and in the end produced a combined program which probably afforded the greatest relief and protection to Jews in any European country." 1/

In January 1945 Mr. Wallenberg disappeared. Some time later he was reported to have been murdered.

Efforts were made by Board Representative Olsen to further rescue and relief measures in the Balkan countries. Indirect and unofficial pressure was brought to bear on the Rumanian Legation in Stockholm concerning the policy of the Rumanian Government towards the Jews. Negotiations were also begun with respect to transport facilities for the evacuation of Jews from Rumania to Turkey, but these were suspended in view of similar negotiations under way in Turkey. 2/ Informal pressure was also exerted on the Bulgarian Minister in Stockholm for a relaxation of Jewish persecutions. 3/ Board funds were made available by Representative Olsen for urgently needed relief operations for Jews in both Rumania and Bulgaria.

Licenses Obtained for Private Organizations. In May 1944 Board Representative Olsen advised the Board of discussions held with the Chief Rabbi of Sweden, who was described as directing the

1/ Letter from Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated June 15, 1945; see also Cable No. 891 from Stockholm dated March 7, 1945, comprising document 114.

2/ See Rescue from Rumania and Rescue to and through Turkey.

3/ See Rescue from Bulgaria.

work of two Swedish committees actively engaged in relief operations for European Jews. Representative Olsen's report summarized the activities of these two groups in various German-controlled areas, and stressed the credit due the Swedish Foreign Office for the accomplishments of the groups. Communication with persons in enemy and occupied territory, for example, reportedly had been through facilities of the Foreign Office and Swedish Missions in the various countries. It was Representative Olsen's opinion that, with proper financial support, refugee relief as well as actual rescue operations from Sweden could be expanded through these groups to a considerable degree, and he urged that arrangements be made for supplying the two groups with funds. 1/

These recommendations were discussed by the Board with various American organizations. While the consensus was that relief and rescue activities concerned with refugees in Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and southern France could most effectively be handled from Switzerland, to which large sums were, in fact, already being remitted regularly for such purposes, 2/ Representative Olsen again urged that funds be placed at his disposal to test the effectiveness of the proposed operations. 3/ Arrangements were eventually made for the World Jewish Congress to send \$10,000 to Sweden to be used by these groups for the rescue and relief of Jews in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania. 4/

Another group for which Representative Olsen recommended that funds be found was an organization of Christian Jews, which had limited resources and facilities but had reportedly done effective work in various occupied areas, including Rumania and Hungary. 5/ In response to this recommendation, the Board arranged with the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church for funds totaling \$15,000 to be sent to Sweden for the relief of Christian Jews in occupied territory. 6/

The American Friends Service Committee was licensed to send \$1,600 for general refugee work in Sweden, and in another instance the remittance by a private individual of \$3,150 was authorized by the Treasury Department, at the Board's request, for the purpose of guaranteeing the maintenance in Sweden of a person then interned in a camp in Finland. The Board's interest in the latter remittance was in order to test whether the establishment of a guarantee in Sweden would actually result in the issuance of a Swedish visa for the interned person and eventually in saving his life.

- 1/ Cable No. 1622 from Stockholm dated May 8, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 984 to Stockholm dated May 23, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 1952 from Stockholm dated June 1, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 1351 to Stockholm dated July 7, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 1771 from Stockholm dated May 19, 1944.
- 6/ Cable No. 1230 to Stockholm dated June 20, 1944.

Refugee Committee Established by City of Stockholm. In June 1944, largely as a result of the efforts of Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen, the City of Stockholm had established a committee for the relief of stateless refugees. A central office was set up for the purpose of assisting such refugees with their personal problems, including securing employment and obtaining urgently needed relief. Minister Johnson and Representative Olsen strongly recommended that American groups be found to contribute funds to further the activities of this committee. 1/

In order to facilitate the procurement of the funds requested, the Board asked for information as to the former nationalities of the refugees in question and as to the extent to which the group included Jews. 2/ Most of the persons concerned, Representative Olsen replied, were of German and Austrian origin, although other European countries were represented. An estimated 75 per cent were Jewish. The only group assisting these refugees which regularly received funds from the United States was the local Mosaic community, which was receiving \$1,000 monthly from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The assistance thus obtained, combined with aid furnished by several other Swedish organizations, had been sufficient to provide only minimum living requirements. As a result, Representative Olsen reported, stateless refugees in Sweden were living under circumstances considerably more difficult than were other refugee groups there having legations to which they could turn. 3/

The Board discussed the plight of these refugees with the International Rescue and Relief Committee, which was subsequently licensed by the Treasury to remit to Stockholm funds totaling \$24,000 for the relief of these stateless refugees and for other purposes. 4/

Evacuation of Rabbinical Group in Shanghai Proposed. Early in 1945 it was reported that Jewish officials in Palestine had been informed by the Vatican that the Japanese Government had agreed to the removal, as part of an exchange scheme, of certain rabbinical scholars among approximately 20,000 Jewish refugees interned in Shanghai. 5/

- 1/ Cable No. 2224 from Stockholm dated June 20, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1310 to Stockholm dated July 1, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 2563 from Stockholm dated July 11, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 1609 to Stockholm dated August 12, 1944.
- 5/ See also Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Union of Orthodox Rabbis, and Jewish Labor Committee).

Information subsequently reached the Board from private sources to the effect that an appeal had been addressed to the King of Sweden from Palestine requesting that Swedish protective passports be given to the rabbinical group in question and that Sweden send a vessel to evacuate them. It was hoped that the granting of Swedish passports might decrease the danger of persecution of the group while it remained in Shanghai and might improve their chances of being granted exit permits by Japanese authorities and eventual transit facilities via Russia.

Minister Johnson reported that the interest of the Government of Sweden had in fact been secured and that the issuance of a collective Swedish visa and reception of the rabbinical group in Sweden had been promised. Subsequent investigation, however, disclosed that the unavailability of means of transportation rendered the evacuation of the group from Japanese areas impossible at that time. 1/

Danish and Norwegian Jews Released. On April 18, 1945, 425 Danish Jews reached Sweden and were placed in an especially arranged Swedish internment camp. The group was said to comprise virtually all Danish Jews in German concentration camps, and their release was the result of special negotiations with the Germans. 2/ It was indicated that the Swedish Foreign Office was endeavoring to secure the release of Norwegian Jews in Grini under the same guarantees of special internment in Sweden, and the arrival of approximately 50 Norwegian Jews from a concentration camp in Norway was reported on May 3, 1945. 3/

Last-Minute Mass Evacuation Accomplished. As a result of other special negotiations with the Germans, several thousand additional persons, including 6,000 women from the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck and a small number of men from Neuengamme and other concentration camps, were released by the Germans late in April 1945. 2/ Transportation promptly and efficiently supplied by the Swedish Red Cross brought them to Malmo, Sweden.

An American Red Cross representative who visited Malmo following the arrival of the refugees reported their account of the miserable existence of the women at Ravensbrueck. Roll call was

1/ Cable No. 1326 from Stockholm dated April 9, 1945; see also Cable No. 563 to Stockholm dated March 27, 1945.

2/ Cables No. 1447 and 1635 from Stockholm dated April 19 and May 2, 1945, comprising documents 115 and 116. See also Special Negotiations.

3/ Cable No. 1669 from Stockholm dated May 3, 1945, comprising document 117.



at three o'clock every morning, and the women were compelled to stand for two hours in all kinds of weather. The only clothing they had was thin dresses, and their meager diet consisted of coffee for breakfast and soup for lunch and dinner, plus one-eighth of a kilogram of bread per day. The women were required to work twelve hours a day at road building, ditch digging, construction, or factory work. Overcrowded conditions at the camp hospital were relieved periodically by the simple process of removing arbitrarily selected patients to be shot, gassed, or cremated.

Many of the refugees corroborated the fact that German vehicles transporting troops and supplies had been using both the Red Cross and the Danish flags for protection and that, when air attacks seemed imminent, German military cars often intermingled with Red Cross convoys seeking protection.

The city of Malmo served as a quarantine and receiving center for these refugees, and the staff of the Swedish Government's Aliens Commission in charge of the refugees was assisted by hundreds of volunteers from various organizations in the city. The refugees were given three meals daily, with special diets provided for the sick and undernourished. According to the refugees themselves, only persons in the best physical condition were released from Ravensbrueck, and the average evacuee was said by doctors to be at half her normal weight. To supplement overcrowded hospitals, all schools were closed and turned into temporary hospitals, and volunteers acted as orderlies to help the nurses and doctors. The sympathetic Swedes did an excellent job of organization, and extra supplies were sent from all over Sweden. 1/

Other women from the camp at Ravensbrueck were evacuated to Switzerland. 2/

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1/ Cable No. 1667 from Stockholm dated May 3, 1945.

2/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

## II D. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH ITALY

Still another avenue of escape from areas held by the enemy lay through Italy— from Yugoslavia and Greece directly, and from Hungary and other more remote enemy-held areas through Yugoslav territory held by Marshal Tito's Partisans. Shortly after the creation of the Board, the Board's great interest in facilitating such escapes in the Mediterranean area was pointed out to Board representatives abroad, who were advised that arrangements could be made for any assistance necessary, including financial, in order to enable these refugees to reach places of safety.

Report on Refugees in Italy. In February 1944 the Board received through the United States Embassy in Algiers a copy of a report prepared by the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission of the Allied Control Commission concerning the condition of Jews in Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia. This report stated that the Sub-Commission had handled approximately 3,000 Jews in liberated Italy. Among these were native Italian Jews who had been either released from internment or displaced from their normal places of residence by reason of military operations; refugees from Germany, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia who reached Italy before or during the war; and refugees received from the Dalmatian Islands. These refugees were being cared for in former internment camps at Ferramonti and at Palermo on Sicily, in camps at Bari and Naples, and in transit camps in Lecce Province. Prior to the Allied landings, the Union of Jewish Committees, Delasem, with a central office in northern Italy, had cared for Jewish immigrants. Contact with this organization, however, had ended in October 1943.<sup>1/</sup>

Special Representative Named for Mediterranean Area. In April 1944 Leonard Ackermann, who had originally been named Special

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<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 106 from Algiers dated February 11, 1944.

Representative of the Board in North Africa, 1/ was named Special Representative of the Board for the entire Mediterranean area to deal with refugee problems in Italy, Corsica, Sardinia, Yugoslavia, and similar areas, as well as in North Africa. The assistance of James Saxon, a Treasury employee in North Africa, was also enlisted in connection with Board operations in the Mediterranean area.2/

In May 1944 permission was granted by the Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean Theatre for the appointment, for territories adjacent to Italy, of a Special Representative to be attached to headquarters of the Allied Control Commission, and Board Representative Ackermann served in this capacity.3/ He was also attached to the United States Mission in Algiers and to Robert Murphy in the latter's capacity as Political Adviser to the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Theatre.4/

Island of Rab. In October 1943 the State Department had forwarded to the Intergovernmental Committee in London information received from private sources to the effect that there were some 4,000 Jewish refugees on the Island of Rab in the Adriatic badly in need of supplies and also threatened with recapture by the Germans. Rab was then held by Yugoslav Partisans.5/

The Intergovernmental Committee later suggested that the State Department itself bring the matter to the attention of the military authorities in North Africa or Italy. While it was recognized that the military forces might be unable to provide transportation for the refugees, it was felt that, if funds could be gotten to the refugees, they themselves might be able to obtain small Italian boats.6/

In response to an inquiry made by the State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in December 1943 had asserted that no direct assistance could be given by the military at that time, since supplies and facilities for displaced persons in Italy were already

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- 1/ Cable No. 612 to Algiers dated February 26, 1944; the instructions cabled Board Representative Ackermann were similar to those sent Representative Hirschmann, which appear as document 3. Representative Ackermann returned to the United States in October 1944.
  - 2/ Cable No. 1086 to Algiers dated April 12, 1944.
  - 3/ Memorandum from the Office of the Chief of Staff, War Department, dated May 28, 1944; see also Cable No. 2214 from Algiers dated June 30, 1944, and Cable No. 5529 to London dated July 14, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 1528 to Algiers dated May 18, 1944.
  - 5/ Airgram No. 1391 to London dated October 12, 1943.
  - 6/ Dispatch No. 7682 from London dated November 4, 1943.

overtaxed and since the taking of such action "might create a precedent which would lead to other demands and an influx of additional refugees for the care of whom the military authorities would be unable to provide facilities and supplies." It was added, however, that the Theatre Commander would continue, as in the past, to care for any refugees able to reach Italy as a result of their own efforts. The substance of this reply was communicated to the Intergovernmental Committee.1/

On February 1, 1944, a memorandum was sent to the War Department by Secretary Morgenthau with the approval of Under Secretary of State Stettinius, proposing a method by which the refugees on Rab might be rescued. It was suggested that the War Department or the Theatre Commander send a message to the Yugoslav Partisans, asking that they furnish local currency to the refugees to facilitate their escape to Italy, the Partisans to be reimbursed in United States dollars or any other currency requested. It was further proposed that, in the event the Partisans could not furnish local currency to the refugees, they should be requested to aid the refugees' escape by guaranteeing payment to any boat owner assisting them, payment to be made to such boat owner by United States military authorities upon the arrival of the refugees in Italy.2/

To finance the contemplated evacuations, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee indicated its willingness to provide an initial remittance of \$25,000, 3/ and the British Government agreed to facilitate the transfer by having its Deputy Paymaster in Southern Italy make available the necessary lire currency.4/ The transaction was licensed by the Treasury Department upon the Board's recommendation.

In April 1944 Board Representative Ackermann reported that word had been received to the effect that the Germans had reoccupied Rab, rendering evacuation impossible unless the refugees on Rab could succeed in reaching Vis. Nevertheless, a message received from the Combined Chiefs of Staff with respect to evacuation possibilities was forwarded to Marshal Tito for his advice and aid.5/

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- 1/ Airgram No. A-12 to London dated January 3, 1944, comprising document 118.
  - 2/ Memorandum to Secretary Stimson from Secretary Morgenthau dated February 1, 1944, comprising document 119.
  - 3/ Cable No. 1782 to London dated March 9, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 1492 from London dated February 23, 1944.
  - 5/ Cable No. 1062 from Algiers dated April 1, 1944.



According to later reports, it appeared that prior to the re-occupation of Rab by the Germans, the Partisans had aided a number of the refugees to escape to Vis and another group of approximately 1,200 persons had been brought to the Yugoslav mainland and had made their way into the interior to Croatia.1/ In October 1944 the Board arranged with the Joint Distribution Committee for the sending of the lire equivalent of \$10,000 to Italy to be used for the relief of refugees who had been enabled to escape from Rab to Partisan-held territory in Yugoslavia. Food, medicines, and clothing were flown in, 2/ and, according to reports received by the Joint Distribution Committee, Yugoslav Partisans also aided in getting some of these relief supplies to Jews in Nazi-held parts of Croatia.

Relief to Jewish Community in Rome. Information emanating from Vatican sources late in December 1943 indicated that the resources of charitable Italian groups which had been aiding Jews in Rome, particularly children of persons who had been seized by the Germans and probably deported to Germany, were almost exhausted.3/ An urgent need for additional funds was reported, and the British Government offered to facilitate the transfer of sums which might be provided by private American agencies by authorizing the British Minister to the Vatican to supply lire.4/ The Board arranged with the Treasury Department for the remittance of the sterling equivalent of \$20,000 by the Joint Distribution Committee to the British Foreign Office, it being understood that the organization in Rome would be able to borrow lire against payment of the credit in London after Allied occupation of Rome. However, this plan proved unacceptable to Delasem, the organization in Rome administering aid to Jews, 5/ and arrangements were ultimately made for the establishment by the Joint Distribution Committee of a credit in the United States for the original \$20,000 plus an additional \$100,000 for the balance of 1944, against which Delasem was authorized to borrow.6/

Evacuations from Yugoslavia. Through Ambassador MacVeagh in Cairo the Board at the outset solicited the cooperation of the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile in promoting the rescue and relief

- 1/ Summary Report on Activities of Board Representative Ackermann dated November 4, 1944.
- 2/ Summary Report on Activities of Board Representative Ackermann dated November 4, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 9021 from London dated December 28, 1943.
- 4/ Cable No. 1154 from London dated February 10, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 2696 from London dated April 3, 1944.
- 6/ Cable No. 3560 to London dated May 4, 1944.

of victims of Axis persecution. A formal reply to the Board's representations was received in May 1944 from the Royal Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressing agreement with the refugee policy of this Government and indicating that Yugoslav diplomatic representatives and other organizations had been instructed to give all possible aid to Allied and international bodies concerned with war refugee questions.1/

The rising tide of persecution in Hungary in early 1944, along with the dangers facing minorities in Yugoslavia, made it imperative that avenues of escape through and from Yugoslavia be explored. Accordingly, in March 1944 James Saxon was sent from North Africa to Bari on the Board's behalf to examine the refugee problem in Italy. Although Partisan representatives had done much to evacuate any endangered Yugoslavs and to facilitate rescue operations from the Balkans through Partisan territory, Saxon's investigation verified previous reports to the effect that they were seriously handicapped by lack of ships, supplies, and money.2/

In order to develop to the fullest an avenue of escape from Hungary through that part of Yugoslav territory occupied by the forces of Marshal Tito, Board Representative Ackermann during the first week of April 1944 discussed the feasibility of such an escape route with Partisan representatives, as well as with British and United States military authorities in Italy. At about the same time the Board learned through Cairo that the British had also approached Marshal Tito in this connection.3/ Later in April the Board was advised that support in rescuing Hungarian Jews had been promised by Marshal Tito.4/

Since it was obvious that the help the Partisans could give depended in part upon the assistance given them, Board Representative Ackermann went to Italy to get more information on shipping and related problems. At the Board's request, the War Shipping Administration sent its representative in that area to help explore shipping problems involved in the projected evacuations.

Reception Facilities Lacking. Because of the limited facilities in southern Italy, Allied military forces had not been able, generally speaking, to encourage the escape of such refugees across the Adriatic to Italy. According to information reaching

1/ Airgram No. A-19 from Cairo dated May 19, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 1173 from Algiers dated April 8, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 88 from Cairo dated April 13, 1944; see also Cable No. 1337 from Algiers dated April 22, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 102 from Cairo dated April 29, 1944.

the Board, refugees had been arriving in Italy from Yugoslavia through their own efforts at the rate of some 1,800 per week, and the problem of caring for these victims of the Axis had considerably burdened military authorities. In fact, facilities for the care of refugees in southern Italy became so seriously overtaxed that military authorities issued a directive temporarily prohibiting the transport by Allied vessels of Yugoslavian refugees. This directive was expected to slow up the flow of refugees considerably. Board Representative Ackermann cabled that relaxation of this restriction would depend on finding temporary havens elsewhere for these refugees.1/

The Board immediately discussed the matter with the Army, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the Foreign Economic Administration, and President Roosevelt. It was the consensus of these agencies and the President that under no circumstances should the entry of refugees into Italy be discouraged. Accordingly, appropriate instructions were sent to the military authorities in North Africa, along with the promise of help in alleviating the problems faced. In addition, the Board arranged for \$50,000 to be sent by the Joint Distribution Committee through Army channels to the Yugoslav Partisan Relief Committee in Bari for rescue and relief purposes to facilitate the flow of refugees through Yugoslavia to Italy.2/

Lack of Medical Facilities in Middle East. On May 25, 1944, Board Representative Ackermann again stressed the importance of the continued removal of refugees from Italy to temporary havens elsewhere in order to permit a continuation of the evacuation of Yugoslavian refugees to Italy. British military authorities, it had been indicated, were prepared to accept large numbers of refugees in Egypt, but this acceptance was on condition that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration supply additional medical personnel. Some 26,000 persons were already being sheltered in Middle East camps and the existing personnel were reported to be sorely taxed. In order to avoid impeding the flow of refugees from Italy to other places of safety, Board Representative Ackermann asked that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration be urged to obtain more personnel, particularly doctors, for its camps in the Middle East and North Africa.3/ Immediate steps were therefore taken by the Board to help solve this problem.4/

- 1/ Cable No. 1450 from Algiers dated May 3, 1944, comprising document 120.
- 2/ Cables No. 1373 and 1795 to Algiers dated May 6 and June 6, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 1727 from Algiers dated May 25, 1944; see also Cable No. 5104 from London dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 121.
- 4/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: Other Countries.

Evacuations to the United States Ordered. Military developments during May 1944 had increased the importance of the escape route through Yugoslavian territory. The desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary and indiscriminate slaughter by the Germans in the Balkans, in particular, made an expansion of this route all the more urgent. As a result, by the end of May plans were being completed for the removal to an Emergency Refugee Shelter in the United States of 1,000 refugees from southern Italy.1/

Other Places of Refuge Sought. Following the decision to remove this one group to the United States for the duration of the war, the Board intensified its efforts to find still other places of refuge relatively close by Southern Italy. One possibility investigated was that some of these refugees might be taken to Sicily or to other places in the Mediterranean area. Cyprus was suggested as another possible haven. Accordingly, Ambassador Robert Murphy and Board Representative Ackermann in Algiers were asked to explore these possibilities carefully; they were also requested to investigate the possibility of a substantial expansion of refugee facilities on the Italian mainland.

While the Board did not consider it desirable to evacuate refugees from Italy to Camp Lyautey at Fedhala, since it was hoped that all of the accommodations of that camp could be reserved for refugees being evacuated through Spain (a position with which the British later expressed complete agreement 2/), the possibility of establishing other centers in French North Africa for refugees from Italy was given consideration. Ambassador Murphy's recommendations on this score were likewise solicited.3/

Insofar as Jewish refugees were concerned, the Board hoped to move as many as possible to Palestine without delay. In this connection, in the case of Turkey the British had adopted the policy that all Jews escaping into Turkey from the Balkan countries would be permitted, after a preliminary security check, to go to Palestine. Once in Palestine, these people were placed in camps, where another security check was made by the British. If found satisfactory, they were gradually released as legal immigrants to Palestine against the current half-yearly immigration quota. Since the application of a similar policy in the case of Jews in southern Italy would make possible the prompt removal of such refugees to Palestine, Ambassador Winant in London was asked to ascertain at the

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1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.

2/ Cable No. 5104 from London dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 121.

3/ Cables No. 1669 and 1761 to Algiers dated May 27 and June 3, 1944.



earliest possible moment whether the British Government would cooperate by granting Palestine certificates to Jewish refugees reaching Italy and by facilitating their prompt removal to Palestine.

Ambassador Winant was also asked to repeat representations previously made with respect to the establishment on a joint basis of temporary havens in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.1/

In similar cables to United States Missions in the neutral countries and in the Soviet Union the Board asked that it be made clear to the governments of these various countries that it was attempting to find havens of refuge for all persecuted peoples who could escape from German-controlled territory. With this principle in mind, United States representatives were asked to explore carefully with the governments to which they were accredited all possible means by which they could facilitate the rescue and relief of the victims of enemy oppression. United States representatives abroad were also asked to do everything possible, consistent with the military situation, to publicize in enemy territory as well as in the various neutral countries the President's action in bringing 1,000 refugees to safe haven in the United States.2/

A circular airgram along the same lines was dispatched to United States Missions in Latin America.

British Respond to President's Action. Following the announcement that this Government was opening its doors for the duration of the war to a group of 1,000 refugees from Southern Italy, and in response to the representations made by Ambassador Winant, the British agreed to the establishment of a temporary haven in Tripolitania.3/

Following President Roosevelt's example, the British granted several thousand Palestine certificates to refugees in Southern Italy, thereby further lightening the burden on Allied military authorities. As a matter of policy, however, the British felt that preference should generally be given under the limited quota allotted for immigration into Palestine to those Jews in enemy territory whose lives were still in danger as a result of enemy oppression, and that alternative places of refuge should be used to the greatest possible extent for refugees in Italy.4/

1/ Cables No. 4413 and 4641 to London dated June 3 and 12, 1944, comprising documents 122 and 123.

2/ Unnumbered Cable to Lisbon dated June 14, 1944, comprising document 124; repeated on the same date to Madrid, Stockholm, Bern, and Ankara; repeated on June 15, 1944, to Moscow.

3/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.

4/ Cable No. 5104 from London dated June 23, 1944, comprising document 121; see also Cable No. 4557 from London dated June 7, 1944.

Relief to Refugees in Southern Italy. Early in August 1944 the Board arranged for the Joint Distribution Committee to send \$30,000 to Southern Italy, to be used to provide food and clothing for Jewish refugees who had managed to escape from Axis territory. Two weeks later the sending of an additional \$50,000 was authorized.

In liberated areas of Yugoslavia relief needs continued to be great. In response to Board Representative Ackermann's urgent proposal that a stockpile of relief supplies be created to meet additional Yugoslav needs as liberation proceeded, the Board, mindful of its prescribed jurisdiction, did what it could to bring the entire situation to the attention of responsible agencies.<sup>1/</sup>

Thousands Evacuated from Partisan Territory. Throughout the summer of 1944 large numbers of victims of Axis ideology were enabled to flee to safety across the Adriatic. During July 1944 alone more than 2,500 persons were rescued in this way. One group, comprising nearly a thousand orphan children, was evacuated by air from the interior of Yugoslavia. Other groups of women, children, and elderly men were evacuated by boat.<sup>2/</sup> In one operation in September 1944, a group of 29 refugees were evacuated from Yugoslavia by plane. Bad flying weather and lack of planes, however, prevented rescuing the rest of a group of some 650 Jews in this manner. These persons and other groups awaiting evacuation from Yugoslavia were fortunately in an area where they were relatively safe from the Germans unless the course of the latter's retreat should move through that section, in which case they would be in grave danger, since the group included many children and old persons who would be difficult to move rapidly.<sup>3/</sup>

In February 1945 the Board's attention was drawn to the need of evacuating 107 Jewish refugees of various foreign nationalities from Topusko in Yugoslavia.<sup>4/</sup> Arrangements were therefore made with the Joint Distribution Committee to send \$1,000 to the Yugoslav Red Cross in Bari, and all but six of these refugees were successfully evacuated to Bari a few weeks later.

Persecutions Continued Meanwhile in Northern Italy. Early in 1944 efforts were initiated in Northern Italy to raise the anti-Jewish campaign there to the same level of intensity as the German-inspired campaigns in Hungary, Slovakia, and other satellite countries.<sup>5/</sup> Hundreds of Jews were interned and later deported; others remained in hiding in provincial areas or in Christian homes.

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 128 to Caserta dated September 12, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 106 from Caserta dated August 11, 1944, comprising document 125.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 653 from Caserta dated October 6, 1944, comprising document 126.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 436 from Caserta dated February 5, 1945.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 2677 from Bern dated April 27, 1944.

In the summer of 1944 Board Representative Ackermann was instructed to discuss with appropriate Italian officials in Rome the Board's interest in any rescue operations on behalf of Jewish refugees in German-occupied Italy which might be undertaken by the Italian resistance movement, insofar as such operations were consistent with the satisfactory carrying out of the regular military program.<sup>1/</sup> Through Board Representative Ackermann the Board learned that Italian resistance groups were receiving some supplies by plane, but that additional supplies of food and clothing were an urgent necessity if the refugees in Northern Italy were to be assisted in hiding in the mountains.<sup>2/</sup>

Vatican Aid Enlisted. Representations were made by Myron Taylor on the Board's behalf and by the representative in Italy of the Intergovernmental Committee toward enlisting papal intervention on behalf of oppressed refugees in Northern Italy. In response to these representations, the Pope agreed to appeal to the German Ambassador to stop additional deportations. In his audience with the Intergovernmental Committee representative, the Pope was reported to have stated that neither his conscience nor history would forgive him if he failed to make the proposed attempt to save the lives of these Axis victims.

Through Ambassador Winant the Board learned that the Intergovernmental Committee had relayed this information to the British Foreign Office, and that the latter had asked the British High Commissioner in Rome to report on what accommodations might be found in liberated Italy for these refugees from German-occupied Italy. Resources there, the British added, were greatly strained and there was a definite limit to the number of refugees that could be brought in. The Foreign Office, in effect, characterized the proposal to evacuate refugees from Northern Italy as having been advanced without adequate information concerning such problems as the likelihood of a substantial influx of refugees from the Balkans and the considerable difficulties being encountered in connection with arrangements for supplies and medical personnel. Until a solution could be found for these problems, the British felt that military officials were not apt to agree to the reception in Southern Italy of many refugees from Northern Italy.<sup>3/</sup>

The Board immediately cabled Ambassador Winant that it was shocked by the position taken by the Foreign Office. While it had not yet learned of any real possibilities for rescuing any Jews who might still be alive in Northern Italy, the Board felt strongly

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 39 to Caserta dated August 16, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 182 from Caserta dated August 22, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 6521 from London dated August 14, 1944.



that every effort should be made to effect a rescue if possible. The Board expressed its confidence that, should the attitude of the German Government be such as to make it possible to effect the rescue of any of these people, the resources and ingenuity of the United States and British Governments were such as to avoid a situation in which these human beings, who otherwise might be rescued, would be consigned to deportation and death. Accordingly, Ambassador Winant was asked to press the British to join this Government in a request that the Pope implement his appeal to German authorities with joint assurances that any persons rescued would be received and cared for by Allied authorities.1/

British Join in Extending Assurances. Word received by the British in response to their request for information as to what accommodations might be found in liberated Italy for refugees from occupied areas indicated that an additional 5,000 persons could be accommodated. Although it was believed that there were considerably more than 5,000 refugees north of the battle line, there was reason to feel that the rapidly changing military situation would obviate the problem of accommodating an additional 5,000 persons. The British Foreign Office therefore felt that assurances of accommodation without numerical limitation could safely be given. The British High Commissioner in Rome was accordingly instructed to ascertain whether the Pope had made his appeal to the Germans with respect to the treatment of these Axis victims. If not, he was to request the Pope to do so, with assurance that the persons rescued would be received and cared for by Allied authorities. If an appeal had already been made, the Pope was to be asked to relay this assurance on the part of the British.2/

The Board cabled this information to Myron Taylor and requested that he join with his British colleague in taking the steps indicated.3/

Germans Disclaim Jurisdiction. A subsequent message from the Holy See transmitted through the American delegation in Rome disclosed that the Pope's approach to the German Government requesting the release of approximately 9,000 refugees in Northern Italy elicited the claim by the Germans that authority over these individuals lay in the Italian Socialist Republican Government. The Vatican indicated that it had no means of communicating with the latter.4/

1/ Cable No. 6722 to London dated August 23, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 6952 from London dated August 26, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 114 to Rome dated August 30, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 317 from Rome dated September 8, 1944, comprising document 127.



Records Discovered Listing Refugees Reaching Italy. In July 1944, according to the Intergovernmental Committee representative in Italy, records were discovered which listed the names of more than 15,000 individual refugees, non-Jewish Yugoslavs, Jews, and other persons, who had been in Italy at one time or another since the war began, but whose current whereabouts were unknown. Other available data were said to give the names of refugees held at "free detention" places and of those held in certain camps at various times. The Intergovernmental Committee representative suggested that notification be given Axis authorities that this information was in the hands of the Allies and that due punishment would be inflicted upon those responsible for the ill treatment or death of the persons named.

In view of the joint agreement as to the respective fields of action of the Board and the Intergovernmental Committee, this matter was referred to the Board.<sup>1/</sup> Information on this score was also sent to the British Foreign Office as of special interest to the United Nations War Crimes Commission.

Board Representative Ackermann, who was then in Naples, was asked to examine the records mentioned, if possible, and to determine their usefulness either for the psychological purposes suggested or for purposes of initiating action that might result in the rescue or relief of persons whose names and whereabouts might be available.<sup>2/</sup> It was Representative Ackermann's conclusion that the material available established with a reasonable degree of certainty that many refugees formerly in central Italy had been moved northwards to an unknown destination shortly before the Allied advance. However, in the absence of any indication of their current whereabouts, it was his view that the records available were of little help for rescue action and that their chief value lay in coordinating the information in the Board's psychological warfare program.<sup>3/</sup>

Mercy Ship Proposed. On July 17, 1944, Myron Taylor transmitted to the Board the substance of another telegram sent to the Intergovernmental Committee by its representative in Italy. This cable described the organized deportation by the Germans of Jews and other refugees from Italy to German concentration camps for the ultimate purpose of their extermination. The Intergovernmental Committee representative suggested that the President of the United States be approached "to intervene on behalf of these persons in German camps and possibly for this purpose utilize the Pope, if

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1/ Cable No. 5597 from London dated July 15, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 401 to Naples dated July 21, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 29 from Naples dated July 29, 1944.

thought advisable, as intermediary." Under the proposal advanced, the Axis would be asked to deliver to a named port in the North Atlantic all internees, including stateless persons in particular. A mercy ship would be sent to that port to carry on a shuttle service to some nearby port in liberated Italy until all had been removed to safety. Under this proposal threats would not be used; the invitation itself would be "courteous and direct" and Germany would merely "be informed beforehand that we hold the names of the majority of those who were interned in Italy."1/

In response to this proposal, the Board indicated its view that any approach to the Germans should indicate the willingness of the Allied Governments, with due regard for military necessities, to consider measures for the reception in Allied and neutral territory of any Jews in German-occupied territory, including but not limited to deportees from Italy. The Intergovernmental Committee was advised that this Government had, in fact, recently indicated to the British the Board's willingness to join in such an approach to the Germans. The Board indicated that, while it was prepared to consider sympathetically any plan designed to meet the Italian problem, it believed it to be more feasible for the Intergovernmental Committee first to determine the practical problems involved and to discuss the matter with the British Government.2/

Relief to Refugees in Northern Italy. In August 1944 arrangements were made through the Board for the Joint Distribution Committee to subsidize relief operations in Rome and liberated areas of Northern Italy to the extent of \$200,000.

In German-occupied areas of Northern Italy, the cooperation of an Italian resistance group known as the "Women's Defense Groups" of the Milan Liberation Committee was obtained for rescue and relief activities initiated by Board Representative McClelland in Switzerland. From funds supplied in large part by the Joint Distribution Committee, 3/ 75,000 Swiss francs were sent into Northern Italy early in July 1944, from which, on the basis of 80 Italian lire per Swiss franc then obtainable, probably some 6,000,000 lire were realized. Because of the increasingly disturbed conditions along the Italo-Swiss border, only a few Jewish refugees were thus enabled to escape into Switzerland. Half a million lire of these funds were used to smuggle relief parcels to Jewish internees in the ill-famed prison of San Vittore in Milan and in other concentration camps in Northern Italy. Other substantial sums were utilized to accomplish the release of a number of political prisoners, some of whom had been condemned to death, from various prisons in

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- 1/ Cable No. 237 from Vatican City dated July 17, 1944.  
2/ Cable No. 5791 to London dated July 24, 1944.  
3/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

Northern Italy. Assistance was also given to the wives and children of Italians who had been deported or executed by the Neo-Fascists or the Gestapo and to the inhabitants of small villages sacked in reprisal actions by the S. S. or the Fascists.1/

Another 25,000 Swiss francs sent in to the resistance group in Northern Italy in January 1945 were similarly utilized for the shelter and maintenance of Jewish women and children in hiding, for relief to families of Italians imprisoned, executed, or deported by the Nazis and the Neo-Fascists, and to finance locally made up parcels sent into various prisons. It was not possible, however, to finance from this source further releases from prisons because the devaluation of the Italian lira had increased to such a point that often as much as several million lire were required to effect a prisoner's release.

In May 1945 Board Representative McClelland arranged to send funds to a minister of the Valdensian Church, a "staunch, Protestant community settled in the mountain valleys up against the Swiss and French borders," to finance the maintenance of fugitives from the Nazis and Fascists being hidden by this congregation. The 6,000 Swiss francs sent purchased a million Italian lire, then selling at one hundred per 55 Swiss centimes. This money served in part to liberate persons from prisons in Milan, but the greater part of it was still unused when the régime in Northern Italy collapsed.

Early in 1945 an agent was sent from Switzerland into Northern Italy to endeavor to obtain from certain Fascist police officials concessions for better treatment of racial and political detainees in the hands of the Neo-Fascists, if not their actual liberation, and to secure all possible information concerning camps and prisons where such persons were detained. It was learned through this agent that virtually all of the Jews arrested in Italy for deportation were concentrated in a camp at Gries, in the Bolzano region, which was directly under the control of the S. S. and inaccessible even to the Neo-Fascists. As a result of a small concession obtained by this agent, a shipment of special medical and food parcels for detainees in the prison of San Vittore in Milan was successfully dispatched on January 18, 1945.2/

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- 1/ Record of Expenditures from War Refugee Board Discretionary Funds dated November 27, 1944, comprising document 56.
- 2/ Record of Expenditures from War Refugee Board Discretionary Funds dated June 2, 1945 (and accompanying letter from Representative McClelland in Bern dated May 30, 1945), comprising document 57.

Several months later, in May 1945, the International Red Cross was able to dispatch and distribute 5,000 food parcels from the Board's stocks in Switzerland to detainees in the concentration camp at Gries.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.



## II E. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH SPAIN

When the War Refugee Board was set up there were, according to word received from private sources, about 8,000 or 9,000 refugees, mostly French, who had succeeded in reaching Spain in the preceding months of Axis oppression. Of this number an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 were Jews, about 1,800 of them stateless. Many of these refugees had violated the Spanish Government's customs declaration requirements and had therefore been arrested and imprisoned in notoriously overcrowded camps, along with other thousands of refugees imprisoned because they were of military age or for other reasons. Other refugees reaching Spain had been permitted to live in restricted residences and even more or less at large in the cities; all reported regularly to Spanish police authorities.

Contradictory Reports Received on Reception Policy. Whatever the reason, comparatively few refugees were entering Spain at the time the Board was established. According to certain reports received, no strict border control was maintained by Spain, nor were any refugees being sent back to France. The fact that only a thin trickle of refugees had reached Spain in preceding weeks was said to be due primarily to the attitude of the Germans and the difficulties they placed in the way of refugees attempting to escape to the Spanish frontier from occupied territory.

On the other hand, there were reports that a fairly strict attitude had been adopted by Spanish authorities with respect to Sephardic Jews. Before Sephardics were permitted entrance, assurances were said to be required to the effect that they would be re-evacuated to another country.<sup>1/</sup> A report received from a member of the Belgian Government-in-Exile said there had also been cases where Belgian refugees were turned back at the Spanish

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<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Spanish Nationality.

border; other Belgians who had been permitted entrance had been arrested and interned for long periods under the worst conditions.1/

Certain Private Agencies Active. Early in 1943 there had been organized in Madrid, with the approval of the Spanish Government, a group known as the Representation in Spain of American Relief Organizations (embracing representation of the American Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Unitarian Service Committee, and later the War Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference). This joint representation had attempted to aid stateless and otherwise unprotected refugees in Spain. Jews who were not stateless, particularly those of Czech, Dutch, and Polish nationality, had been receiving care and help from the consulates of their respective governments.

Detailed reports received by the Board from representatives of these agencies who had returned from Spain indicated that the Spanish Government had done much, by imprisonment and otherwise, to make the lives of refugees there unpleasant and to render the prospect of escape to that country as forbidding as possible.

Approach to Spanish Government Proposed. In the first communication to Madrid with respect to the Board, Ambassador Hayes was asked to approach the Spanish Government, explain the refugee policy of this Government, and ascertain the extent to which Spain was prepared to cooperate.2/ Ambassador Hayes, however, replied that he did not consider it "an opportune moment" in this country's relations with Spain to approach the Spanish Government in the sense suggested.3/

Convinced that opportunities to save lives would be lost as a result of this attitude, the Board on February 18, 1944, finally obtained State Department clearance on a second communication to Madrid, in which it was proposed that Ambassador Hayes take certain steps to promote the removal of refugees then in Spain as rapidly as possible, and that he explore the possibility of Spain's relaxing her border controls so as to admit more refugees. A public statement to this effect by the Spanish Government was also proposed. It was further suggested that a

1/ Dispatch No. 109 from London dated March 4, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 207 to Madrid dated January 25, 1944; the instructions cabled Ambassador Hayes were similar to those dispatched to Ambassador Winant in London, which appear as document 5.

3/ Airgram No. A-59 from Madrid dated February 15, 1944, comprising document 128.

substantial number of the refugees whom the Board proposed to remove from Spain for the purpose of making room for others could be moved to Camp Lyautey in North Africa.1/

In order to care for new refugees, especially stateless persons and those lacking the protection of their respective governments, and to effect their removal from Spain, if necessary on an involuntary basis, the Board proposed that Ambassador Hayes ask the Spanish Government to set up reception camps in which future arrivals would remain until they could be transferred to North Africa. In this connection the Ambassador was asked to indicate that necessary arrangements would be made by the Board to finance the maintenance of such stateless and unprotected refugees as might be received in Spain, and that the responsibility for arranging for the transfer of such refugees to North Africa as rapidly as possible would likewise be assumed by the Board.

The Board emphasized that these negotiations with Spain would be on an entirely different level than the political and economic negotiations being carried on with that Government. The Board's proposal was to constitute a simple humanitarian appeal rather than a request to take certain action favorable to this country at a sacrifice to Spain.2/

Hayes Objected to Program Proposed. Again Ambassador Hayes declined to take the steps suggested by the Board, citing as one reason for his opposition to asking the Spanish Government to relax her border controls the danger that the entry of German agents into Spain might thereby be facilitated. The Board felt that this argument, in particular, lacked validity in view of the large number of Germans in Spain at that time and the relative facility of communication and transportation between Spain and German-occupied territory; moreover, Ambassador Hayes had previously indicated to the Board that Spanish border authorities were not turning people back at the border anyway.

A public statement of Spain's willingness to receive endangered persons was held by Ambassador Hayes to be utterly impossible. As an alternative to the Board's proposals, the Ambassador suggested that the Spanish Government might be able to expedite the release of refugees from Axis-controlled areas by directly approaching the German Government with an offer to grant transit or temporary residence visas to refugees "wishing to leave," although he admitted that he had no idea as to what

1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.

2/ Cable No. 463 to Madrid dated February 13, 1944, comprising document 129.

the reaction of the Spanish Government would be to such a proposal or as to how successful it would be in the event it agreed to take up the matter with the Germans. Assurances would have to be given to Spain as to the ultimate destination of such refugees, he added, before Spain could be asked to make such an approach, and a "more adequate solution" than Camp Lyautey (the facilities of which, under a previous agreement with French authorities in North Africa, were limited to a maximum of 2,000 at any one time) would be required.1/

Objections Made to Appointment of Special Representative. Shortly after the Board was set up, David Blickenstaff, who was head of the Representation in Spain of American Relief Organizations, had been proposed to Ambassador Hayes as the Board's Special Representative in Spain.2/ Ambassador Hayes in turn inquired as to whether, in the event of Mr. Blickenstaff's designation as the Board's representative, Mr. Blickenstaff would be expected to give up his work as director of American relief organizations in Spain. Ambassador Hayes indicated that the latter job was being handled with unusual competence, but intimated that it could not be continued so effectively if Mr. Blickenstaff were given such additional responsibilities as the Board's assignment would entail.3/

In lieu of Mr. Blickenstaff and in order to insure full-time Board representation, the Board therefore proposed the appointment of James Saxon, a Treasury employee then in North Africa, to serve in Spain.4/ In reply, Ambassador Hayes strongly recommended that Mr. Blickenstaff be designated as the Board's Representative if, in the light of the Ambassador's other comments and suggestions, the Board still felt it necessary to have a representative in Spain.5/

More Concrete Plan Suggested. In view of Ambassador Hayes' opposition to approaching the Spanish Government with the measures suggested to him, the Board on March 23, 1944, transmitted for his consideration and approval for submission to the Spanish Government a more concrete plan designed to facilitate the speedy evacuation of refugees to and through Spain. In addition to setting up a War Refugee Board staff at Madrid, this plan contemplated the establishment of a reception center close

- 1/ Cable No. 683 from Madrid dated February 28, 1944, comprising document 130.
- 2/ Cable No. 530 to Madrid dated February 25, 1944, comprising document 131.
- 3/ Cable No. 378 from Madrid dated March 3, 1944, comprising document 132.
- 4/ Cable No. 726 to Madrid dated March 16, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 974 from Madrid dated March 20, 1944.



to the Franco-Spanish border, to be operated either by the Board or by private relief organizations under Board supervision. The refugees were to be given a physical examination upon arrival at the center and, if able, were to be moved promptly on to reception centers in North Africa after preliminary screening and after being provided with requisite travel documents.

The Board assured Ambassador Hayes that negotiations were in progress for other havens and that Camp Lyautey was not to be the only haven to which refugees could be removed from Spain. The Board also indicated that, while it was aware that the number of stateless refugees entering Spain from occupied areas at that time was extremely small, vigorous steps were being taken vis-a-vis Germany and the satellite countries which, it was confidently expected, would stimulate the flow of refugees into Spain and other neutral countries from occupied areas.<sup>1/</sup> In any event, the Board felt that in the forthcoming months when the snow melted in the Pyrenees the flow of refugees into Spain was certain to increase.

In response to Ambassador Hayes' request, the Board also undertook to clarify the term "involuntary removal," emphasizing that every effort would be made to convince the refugees concerned that the travel of still other endangered persons from Axis territory through Spain was dependent upon the rapid departure from Spain of those who had already entered.<sup>2/</sup>

Ambassador Hayes replied that he felt that no such plan to further the evacuation of refugees to and through Spain should be put into effect until it became apparent that efforts to stimulate the influx of refugees would render insufficient the facilities already in existence there. According to Ambassador Hayes, the facilities then available - that is, the small staff operating in Spain under the direction of David Blickenstaff for relief purposes, with no efforts toward further rescues being made - were adequate and had the support of the Spanish Government. The latter, Ambassador Hayes averred, would look with disfavor upon the plan outlined by the Board.<sup>3/</sup>

Evacuation of French Refugees to North Africa. During 1943 and early 1944 the Spanish Government, according to Ambassador Hayes, had been helpful in permitting thousands of Frenchmen, mostly of military age, to escape through Spain to French North Africa. The first authorization of such departure had been in

<sup>1/</sup> See Psychological Warfare Programs.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 799 to Madrid dated March 23, 1944, comprising document 133.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1195 from Madrid dated April 6, 1944, comprising document 134.

March 1943 in response to representations made by the Ambassador himself and had specified that such persons were to depart by way of Portugal. In September 1943 the Spanish Government finally agreed to the direct evacuation of these refugees by sea from Spanish ports to North Africa. Once these French nationals reached North Africa, French authorities began providing for their care, taking many of them who were qualified into the French military forces and giving civilian employment to others.

These evacuations continued throughout the life of the Board, with French convoys calling regularly at Spanish ports to evacuate French refugees in groups of 300 to 500 per trip.<sup>1/</sup> Between January and September 1944 a total of 2,400 such refugees were evacuated from Spain.<sup>2/</sup>

Many Stateless Refugees Also Removed to North Africa. Hundreds of stateless refugees were also evacuated from Spain to North Africa and were cared for at Camp Marechal Lyautey near Casablanca.<sup>3/</sup> Counter-balancing these evacuations, however, was the fact that new arrivals from France at one point were at the rate of about 10 a day.<sup>4/</sup>

In the hope that the French might be able to take some 25 to 50 stateless persons holding North African visas in each of their convoys sailing from Spanish ports, the Board asked Board Representative Ackermann in Algiers to do his utmost to obtain such a commitment from the French.<sup>5/</sup>

At the request of Ambassador Hayes, the Blickenstaff organization in Spain handled applications made by refugees for admission to Camp Lyautey, distributed these applications to the screening authorities, advised the applicants concerning their acceptance or rejection, and negotiated with Spanish authorities concerning the release of refugees from camps and prisons and from Spain itself.

The Blickenstaff group also assumed charge of assembling and transporting to the port of embarkation the refugees accepted for entry into the camp. Three groups were thus aided: 35

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 2415 from Madrid dated July 11, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Airgram No. A-387 from Madrid dated August 16, 1944, comprising document 135.
- <sup>3/</sup> See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.
- <sup>4/</sup> Airgram No. A-188 from Madrid dated May 10, 1944, comprising document 136; see also Cables No. 1459, 1559, 2326 and 2418 from Lisbon dated May 15, May 23, July 27, and August 5, 1944, respectively.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 2230 to Algiers dated July 18, 1944.

refugees who left in May 1944, a main group of 573 who departed in June, and 21 in July. A large number of those evacuated to Lyautey were Sephardics who had been deported from Athens and later, at Spain's request, released from German concentration camps but who, though given Spanish documents, were nevertheless not accepted as Spanish nationals.1/

Through the intervention of Spain, as the protecting power of certain Latin-American countries, another group of Sephardics numbering several hundred was able to reach Spain in safety and continue to other destinations.2/

Assistance through the Blockade Promised. In July 1944 the Board proposed to United States Missions abroad that joint Anglo-American approaches be made to the various European neutrals, including Spain, for the purpose of appealing for even more liberal policies than had previously been followed with respect to the reception and temporary care of refugees from German-controlled Europe. To encourage such policies, European neutrals were to be assured that the Governments of the United States and Great Britain would arrange for the provision of additional food and other supplies to meet the added burden resulting from the temporary care of refugees, as well as funds if needed, and that efforts would be made to arrange for the onward movement of the refugees so accepted. No new representations on this matter were made by the United States Embassy in Madrid, however, inasmuch as Embassy spokesmen felt that the policy of this Government with respect to trans-blockade relief had already been made abundantly clear to Spanish authorities.3/

Evacuation of Children from France. In the early part of 1944 the Board had learned that a number of children could be brought into Spain from France through the services of professional guides, who would conduct them across the mountains for a fee of from \$250 to \$300 per child. If private agencies in Spain could be supplied with funds, it was the thought that several hundred children could be brought through the Pyrenees in this way. The Board discussed this proposal with the Joint Distribution Committee, which expressed its willingness to supply the funds needed.

In March 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, an appropriate license was issued permitting the representative of the Joint Distribution Committee in Spain to carry on the necessary

1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Spanish Nationality.

2/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

3/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.

communications with persons in enemy territory, as well as the requisite financial operations up to \$100,000. When the substance of this license was sent to Ambassador Hayes for transmission to the Joint Distribution Committee's representative in Spain,<sup>1/</sup> however, the Ambassador informed the Board that he had not advised this representative of the terms of this license. Ambassador Hayes took the position that this person's loyalty to the Allied cause was doubtful (the latter was Portuguese and Portugal was neutral); he also raised objections to any American charitable organization engaging in the clandestine operations contemplated by the license. On the matter of the alleged lack of loyalty, this charge was undocumented by Ambassador Hayes; it was also inconsistent with other reports received by the Board from reliable sources, including the American Friends Service Committee, and with subsequent investigations made on the Board's behalf in Spain.

Still another objection cited by the Ambassador was his fear that the contemplated program would seriously interfere with certain existing facilities for the rescue of Allied airmen who had been shot down over occupied Europe.<sup>2/</sup> The Board repeatedly advised its representatives abroad, and through them the representatives of private agencies engaged in clandestine operations, that under no circumstances should refugee rescue operations be permitted to have such an effect.

Despite the objections raised by Ambassador Hayes, the rescue of endangered children from occupied Europe to Spain proceeded. Beginning in April 1944 and continuing throughout the summer of that year, a number of small groups including both children and adults, accompanied by professional guides, succeeded in making their way to Spanish territory.<sup>3/</sup>

In May 1944 authorization was given by the Treasury for the remittance of an additional \$50,000 to be used to continue clandestine rescue operations from enemy territory to Spain. Other Joint Distribution Committee funds were sent to Portugal to finance the maintenance there of refugees proceeding across Spain to Portugal.<sup>4/</sup> Several hundred of the persons evacuated

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 752 to Madrid dated March 18, 1944, comprising document 137.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 997 from Madrid dated March 22, 1944, comprising document 138; see also Cable No. 1861 from Madrid dated May 26, 1944.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1214 from Lisbon dated April 22, 1944; see also Cables No. 1155 and 1555 from Lisbon dated April 18 and May 23, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> See Rescue to and through Portugal.



from Axis territory to Spain were enabled to proceed directly to Palestine, applications for Palestine certificates having been handled by the Blickenstaff group.

United States Visas for Child Refugees. In the hope that Spanish and Portuguese authorities would look more favorably upon the evacuation of child refugees from France if they were to receive assurances that the children would eventually be evacuated from Spain, the Board obtained the concurrence of the State Department to an expanded visa program. As a result, in April 1944 consular officers in Spain and Portugal were authorized to issue up to 1,000 visas to refugee children from France reaching Spain and Portugal during the first six months of 1944. These visas were in addition to the 4,000 visas made available as a result of Board efforts for child refugees reaching Switzerland. The Board asked that appropriate Spanish authorities be advised of these instructions and of the Board's previous guarantee to arrange for any financing that might be necessary to provide maintenance for refugees from enemy oppression arriving in Spain.1/

In May 1944, upon learning that rescue operations apparently were being carried on in Spain, Ambassador Hayes requested a clarification of the situation.2/

The Board in turn indicated that its views on this matter would be discussed with the Ambassador by James G. McDonald, Chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, who was at that time expected to visit Spain on a special mission for the Board.3/ Ambassador Hayes was advised that if more immediate information was desired on these matters, he might wish to get in touch with James Mann, an Assistant Executive Director of the Board then in Lisbon conferring with Minister Norweb and Board Representative Dexter. The Board also indicated that, if the Ambassador desired, Mann could proceed to Madrid for a conference immediately after completion of his mission in Lisbon.4/

Question of Board Representation Reopened. Mann went to Spain later in June 1944 to discuss certain refugee problems with interested persons in Madrid and Barcelona. In the course of this visit Mann reopened with Ambassador Hayes the question of the Board's sending a representative to Spain. While the Ambassador

1/ Cable No. 1008 to Madrid dated April 12, 1944, comprising document 139.

2/ Cable No. 1861 from Madrid dated May 26, 1944.

3/ It was later decided that McDonald would not make the proposed trip to Spain.

4/ Cable No. 1699 to Madrid dated June 10, 1944.

was not convinced that there was work in the refugee field in Spain not already being done by the Blickenstaff organization, he stated that he would agree to the Board's sending a representative to Spain for a period of not more than two months, to make a thorough study of refugee matters, with the understanding that this representative would remain as an attache of the Embassy only if the Ambassador were convinced of the need for such a representative.1/

Meanwhile, pleas for Board representation in Spain, as one means of helping solve a conflict which had arisen there in connection with rescue operations, had been received from Board Representative Dexter in Portugal. In one memorandum on the matter, Dexter stated that solution of the conflict, if not the success of the Board's entire program for the Iberian Peninsula, was bound up with adequate representation in Spain. Board Representative Dexter went on to indicate that many of the difficulties that existed in Portugal could probably be overcome if the Board had a representative in Spain with the full backing of the Embassy there. Certain matters of fact which were at issue in Portugal, he added, would certainly be much more easily clarified from Madrid or Barcelona than from Lisbon.2/

Another Private Rescue Scheme Proposed. During July of 1944 a private proposal designed to accomplish the evacuation of some 3,000 Jewish children from France to Spain and Portugal was simultaneously presented to the Board and to the Intergovernmental Committee in London. Since the real difficulty was obtaining French permission for the departure of the children from France and since previous approaches to the French made by the Intergovernmental Committee through the Swiss had failed, the Committee recommended that further approaches be made by the International Red Cross. The Intergovernmental Committee went on to indicate that it was ready to take up the matter with the International Red Cross either independently or jointly with the Board.3/

Despite the fact that this proposal was nothing more than a variant on previous proposals made to the French and Germans, the Board at once indicated its willingness to join in any request the Intergovernmental Committee saw fit to make of the International Red Cross.4/

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- 1/ Cable No. 2110 from Lisbon dated July 8, 1944, comprising document 140.
  - 2/ Dispatch No. 513 from Lisbon dated May 17, 1944.
  - 3/ Cable No. 6054 from London dated July 29, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 6323 to London dated August 10, 1944.

In view of the success of Allied military developments in France, however, the Intergovernmental Committee did no more on this matter.1/

Evacuations to Tangier. As a result of representations made by the United States Embassy in Madrid, the Spanish Government in July 1944 authorized the issuance of visas to 500 Jewish children in Hungary whom Jewish organizations in Tangier hoped to transfer to temporary refuge in Spanish Morocco. The Spanish Legation in Budapest was said to have been instructed to do everything possible to facilitate the travel of this group to Spain. It was also understood that the Vatican had requested papal representatives in Berlin and Budapest to use their good offices to the same end.2/

Since there were the inevitable delays in obtaining transportation to Tangier, the Board asked Board Representative McClelland in Switzerland to request the International Red Cross to undertake interim supervision of these children in Hungary to prevent their deportation or persecution. It was also hoped that such supervision could be extended to the 1,500 Jews in Hungary for whom Spanish visas had been authorized.3/

Additional Visas Sought. Since temporary protection might be obtained for children holding visas for Tangier, not only prior to evacuation but also whether or not they were actually evacuated to North Africa, efforts were made through the United States Legation in Tangier to obtain an increase in the number of children's visas granted for Spanish Morocco.4/ Ambassador Hayes was advised that, since visas for other countries could be counted upon to provide temporary protection even if their holders were never actually evacuated, he might adopt the same procedure with regard to Spanish visas in general, without reference to available reception facilities.5/

Deplorable Frontier Incidents Reported. Through the United States Embassy in Madrid the Board was informed that an order was reported to have been issued during the summer of 1944 to frontier guards in the Spanish provinces of Huesca instructing them to turn back certain categories of refugees attempting to enter

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- 1/ Cable No. 6795 from London dated August 22, 1944.
  - 2/ Cable No. 2479 from Madrid dated July 15, 1944, comprising document 141.
  - 3/ Airgram No. A-199 from Tangier dated September 12 and Cable No. 3246 to Bern dated September 20, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 251 from Tangier dated August 12, 1944.
  - 5/ Cable No. 2361 to Madrid dated August 24, 1944.

Spanish territory, as a result of which a considerable number of refugees of French and other nationalities were refused entry into Spain and turned over to the custody of the German authorities from whom they were fleeing. One group of 23 persons was said to have arrived at the frontier town of Sallent, where Spanish border authorities gave them false directions taking them back into German-held territory. The group was prevented from falling into German hands only by a chance meeting with another group of refugees traveling in the opposite direction; with the latter group they returned to Sallent. It also was reported that the 12 men included in this party were thereupon placed by the border authorities at Sallent in a truck and driven back across the frontier in German-occupied territory where they, along with 26 other refugees who had had the misfortune to be encountered en route were handed over to a German frontier patrol. Other incidents of the same sort had been reported from other border points.

In a note reciting these reports, the Embassy in July 1944 registered a protest with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Embassy was later informed that, immediately upon the receipt of information concerning these occurrences, instructions were issued countermanding the provincial order on which the action of the frontier officials apparently had been based. The incidents in question were also made the subject of forceful representations on the part of both the British Embassy and the French Mission in Madrid, and it was thought that the Spanish Government had been sufficiently impressed with the gravity of these incidents to do everything possible to prevent their reoccurrence.<sup>1/</sup>

Spanish Foreign Office Kept Informed. At the Board's request, Ambassador Hayes transmitted to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs the text of the statement made by President Roosevelt on March 24, 1944, condemning the persecution of innocent persons and calling upon the free peoples of the world to assist in the rescue of such victims. In due course, the text of the Roosevelt message concerning the removal of refugees from southern Italy to Oswego, the text of the resolution of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs concerning the Hungarian persecutions, and the text of Archbishop Spellman's statement on the persecutions in Hungary<sup>2/</sup> were also transmitted to the Spanish Government by Ambassador Hayes.

<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 2790 from Madrid dated July 25, 1944, comprising document 142.

<sup>2/</sup> See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.



United States Visas for Children from Hungary. In view of the small number of children who had been arriving in Switzerland and elsewhere from France, and in view of the apparent opportunity to save Hungarian children, arrangements were undertaken by the Board to have the 5,000 United States visas previously made available only for children from France made available as well for children from Hungary and elsewhere in occupied Europe. Consular authorization toward this end was extended in August 1944.1/

Spanish Response to Hungarian Situation. In August 1944, at the Board's request, the United States Embassy in Madrid asked the Spanish Government to permit the entry into Spain of persons released from Hungary pursuant to the decision of Hungarian authorities to allow the departure from that country of Jews in possession of entry permits entitling them to admission to any other country. More specifically, Spain was requested to permit the entry, in transit to further destinations outside of Spain, of such persons to whom United States immigration visas were issued on or after July 1, 1941, but who, because of transportation difficulties and the advent of war, had not been able to make effective use of such visas.2/

As a result of this request, the Spanish Minister in Budapest was instructed to grant transit visas to such persons and to intercede with Hungarian and German authorities for the purpose of facilitating the departure of these persons from Hungary. While Spanish authorities were aware of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of these persons actually proceeding to Spain, they were aware that the issuance of such visas might serve as a means of protection and were willing to authorize their issuance on that basis.3/

Protection Sought for Refugees Interned by Spain. Following the liberation of France, it was learned that large numbers of the German armed forces who had fled to Spain were being placed in the concentration camp of Miranda de Ebro. In the light of this information and in view of the presence in that camp of a number of Allied and stateless refugees, a note was addressed to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting that adequate

1/ Cable No. 2324 to Madrid dated August 21, 1944, comprising document 143; see also Rescue from Hungary.

2/ Dispatch No. 2905 from Madrid dated August 14, 1944, comprising document 144. See also Rescue from Hungary.

3/ Dispatch No. 3139 from Madrid dated September 26, 1944, comprising document 145.

steps be taken by Spanish authorities to insure the protection of the latter group from possible molestation at the hands of the newly arrived and considerably more numerous German military refugees.1/

Extension of Spanish Protection Confirmed. Toward the end of October 1944 the Board forwarded to Ambassador Hayes the text of a letter written by the Spanish Ambassador in Washington to a private welfare agency indicating that special instructions had been given to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin to take steps designed to protect all Jews in German territory.2/

Ambassador Hayes in turn advised the Board that a Spanish official had orally confirmed to him that instructions along the lines indicated in the Spanish Ambassador's letter had been sent to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin on several occasions. This official had asserted, however, that there had been an increasing unwillingness on the part of the German Government to cooperate in such matters.3/

Rescue Work Discontinued. Following conferences held between Ambassador Hayes and Executive Director Pehle in July 1944 during the course of the Ambassador's brief visit to this country, plans were made for the return to Madrid of James Mann to serve as the Board's Representative there. This appointment was cleared with the State Department in mid-August.4/ Shortly thereafter and in view of the successful reoccupation of France by Allied forces, it appeared that the possibility of doing important rescue work from Spain no longer existed. The Board therefore decided that Mann would be able to do more effective work from Great Britain for the rescue of persons in imminent danger of death, and he was dispatched to London on August 31, 1944.5/

On August 24, 1944, Board Representative Dexter in Lisbon was instructed that no further efforts should be made to rescue children or adults from France through Spain.6/ This decision was subsequently communicated to the persons and organizations in Spain through which clandestine rescues had been accomplished.7/

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1/ Dispatch No. 2952 from Madrid dated August 25, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2871 to Madrid dated October 25, 1944.

3/ Airgram No. A-623 from Madrid dated November 2, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 2294 to Madrid dated August 18, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 2370 to Madrid dated August 24, 1944.

6/ Cable No. 2331 to Lisbon dated August 24, 1944, comprising document 146.

7/ Cable No. 2657 from Lisbon dated August 29, 1944.

As of early 1945, there remained in Spain some 1,000 refugees who were receiving financial assistance from American relief organizations. Of these, 322 had successfully applied for admission to Camp Lyautey and were awaiting transportation; other applications were pending. In order that these refugees and succeeding groups might be evacuated, Blickenstaff had urged the UNRRA representative in North Africa to attempt to obtain permission from the competent military authorities for small groups of from three to five persons to be accepted on occasional ships leaving Gibraltar for North African ports, or else that a ship be sent to some Spanish port to embark successive groups.1/

Most of the refugees remaining in Spain and Portugal were later found to be within the mandate of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees and became the subject of a survey undertaken by private relief agencies with a view to assumption by the Committee of responsibility for their maintenance and ultimate resettlement or repatriation. The 1945 budget estimate subsequently submitted by the Committee in connection with its program for refugees in the Iberian Peninsula was approved by the United States and British Governments.2/

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1/ Dispatch No. 3819 from Madrid dated January 8, 1945, comprising document 147.

2/ See Rescue to and through Portugal.

## II F. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE TO AND THROUGH PORTUGAL

In order to enlist the cooperation of the Portuguese Government in the rescue and relief of victims of Axis persecution, Minister Norweb in Lisbon was asked to approach the Portuguese Foreign Office, explain the purpose of the Board, and solicit Portugal's cooperation. 1/ Since Portugal was not contiguous to Germany or to German-occupied territory, it was hoped that the Portuguese contribution to alleviating the war refugee problem would consist of two things: (1) providing refuge for a number of refugees consistent with Portugal's limited economy and (2) permitting the transit through Portugal of refugees who might succeed in escaping from occupied France into Spain, as well as their evacuation from Portuguese ports to North Africa, Palestine, Canada, and elsewhere.

Following approaches made by Minister Norweb along these lines, the Board was advised that the Portuguese Foreign Office viewed with sympathy this Government's policy on refugees and had pledged its general cooperation. 2/ Significantly, the Portuguese Government throughout 1943 had permitted the transit through Portugal of thousands of French refugees, mostly of military age, on their way to French North Africa.

Reports Received from Private Agencies. Shortly after the Board's inception, Minister Norweb called together representatives of the several relief organizations concerned with refugee matters in Portugal to advise them of the creation of the Board and to solicit their cooperation and suggestions.

1/ Cable No. 200 to Lisbon dated January 25, 1944; the instructions cabled Minister Norweb were similar to those sent to Ambassador Winant in London, which appear as document 5.

2/ Cable No. 468 from Lisbon dated February 15, 1944; see also Airgram No. A-192 from Lisbon dated March 14, 1944.



As a result of this meeting, four memoranda relating to Portugal and the refugee problem were later transmitted to the Board: a detailed historical summary prepared by the Lisbon representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a memorandum prepared by the American Friends Service Committee on what this Government as well as Portuguese authorities might do, a similar memorandum submitted by the Unitarian Service Committee, and a memorandum along the same lines prepared by the Emigration Association of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigration Aid Society. 1/

Reports were also received by the Board from representatives in Portugal of the War Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference with respect to their relief activities among refugees in that country, particularly among Catholic refugees from Nazi oppression. 2/

Portuguese Reception Policy Described. According to word reaching the Board, Portugal's immigration policy had been quite lenient when the Axis persecutions first got under way, but restrictions had later been tightened. Only transit visas were being granted to refugees, and these were limited to cases where the refugee had a valid end visa plus a paid reservation on a steamship leaving on a definite date. According to information available to the Board, illegal entrants were not, however, excluded; after short periods of arrest their entry had usually been legalized. Of these refugees, some were in forced residence, others were restricted to town liberty, while a few had full liberty.

As of early 1944 there were an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 refugees in Portugal, exclusive of Spanish Republicans. The Joint Distribution Committee had about 600 persons on its relief rolls, the Unitarian Service Committee had 250, the Friends Service Committee about 70, and the Catholic War Relief Services 80, these totals being exclusive of Belgian, British, Dutch, and Polish refugees who were supported there by their own governments.

Appointment of Special Representative. In April 1944 Dr. Robert C. Dexter, European representative of the Unitarian Service Committee, was named Special Representative of the

1/ Dispatch No. 217 from Lisbon dated February 16, 1944.

2/ Dispatches No. 336 and 490 from Lisbon dated March 30 and May 9, 1944.

Board in Portugal and Special Attache' on war refugee matters to the United States Legation in Lisbon. 1/ Shortly after his arrival in Lisbon, Dr. Dexter forwarded his own report on the refugee situation in Portugal, as well as one prepared by the British Embassy in Lisbon. 2/ Dr. Dexter also called together a second meeting of the representatives of private American agencies to insure the coordination of refugee rescue and relief activities in Portugal. 3/

Relief Parcels Dispatched from Portugal. In early 1944 Portugal had served as the source of substantial numbers of food parcels purchased by the International Red Cross with funds supplied by the Joint Distribution Committee and the American Friends Service Committee for distribution among civilian internees in Holland and Germany and among displaced persons in France. 4/

Evacuation Operations Licensed. In March 1944, in accordance with the Board's recommendation, a Treasury license was issued to the Joint Distribution Committee for the evacuation of refugees from enemy territory and for their maintenance while in Portugal. The remittance of \$25,000 was authorized for this purpose. 5/

The evacuation of a large number of refugees to Palestine from Portugal was partially financed by the Joint Distribution Committee. Other refugees aided by this organization were enabled to depart for Canada. In the course of one such voyage in May 1944, the Portuguese "Serpa Pinto", bound for the United States and Canada and sailing under a safe-conduct from the belligerent powers, was stopped in Mid-Atlantic by gunfire from

- 1/ Cable No. 949 to Lisbon dated April 4, 1944; the instructions cabled Board Representative Dexter were similar to those sent Board Representative Hirschmann, which appear as document 3. See also Cables No. 1046 and 1053 from Lisbon dated April 8 and 10, 1944. In June 1944 the United States Legation in Lisbon was elevated to the rank of United States Embassy and Minister Norweb served thereafter as United States Ambassador to Portugal.
- 2/ Dispatches No. 427 and 455 from Lisbon dated April 24 and May 2, 1944.
- 3/ Dispatch No. 439 from Lisbon dated April 28, 1944.
- 4/ See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations.
- 5/ Cable No. 800 to Lisbon dated March 18, 1944; see also Dispatch No. 355 from Lisbon dated April 4, 1944.

a German submarine. After the passengers were forced to spend nine hours in lifeboats on threat of torpedoing the vessel, the submarine departed, leaving the ship and passengers unharmed, except for the accidental deaths of three of the 385 persons aboard and the taking of two American citizens as prisoners. The "Serpa Pinto" subsequently reached Philadelphia safely. The refugees, bound for Canada, were taken under guard from the ship and put aboard a sealed train for the last lap of their trip, without technical entrance into the United States. 1/

A basic Treasury license had also been issued in March 1944 to the Unitarian Service Committee permitting its representatives in Portugal to communicate with persons in enemy territory and to engage in financial operations necessary in the rescue and relief of victims of Axis oppression. No funds were ever transmitted under this license, however.

In April 1944 a license was issued to the Jewish Labor Committee authorizing its representative in Portugal to carry on relief and evacuation operations in enemy territory, notably in France. A remittance of \$10,000 was authorized for these operations.

In May 1944 the World Jewish Congress was also licensed to carry on a rescue program from Portugal. As a means of preventing competitive duplication in the rescue of child refugees, this license stipulated that funds remitted were to be utilized by the World Jewish Congress representative in Lisbon only as authorized by Board Representative Dexter. The remittance of up to \$50,000 was approved in this connection. 2/

Approaches Made to the Satellites. In March and again in April 1944, at the Board's request, Minister Norweb attempted to make known to the German satellite countries, through channels available to him, the attitude of this Government concerning continued collaboration by Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Rumanian authorities in the anti-Jewish persecutions, as well as the opportunities that existed whereby these satellite countries could be of assistance in rescue and relief operations. 3/

United States Visas for Children Reaching Portugal. In April 1944, in an effort to encourage the Spanish and Portuguese

1/ The New York Times, June 1, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 1420 to Lisbon dated May 19, 1944.

3/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions.

Governments to give refuge to additional refugee children from France, this Government authorized United States consular officers in Spain and Portugal to issue up to 1,000 visas to such children arriving during the first six months of 1944. The United States Embassy in Madrid was given the responsibility for supervising and controlling the assignment of quota numbers to consular offices in both Spain and Portugal. Minister Norweb was asked to advise appropriate Portuguese authorities of these instructions, and to inform them that the Board would undertake to arrange for any financing that might be necessary to provide maintenance for refugees from enemy oppression arriving in Portugal. 1/

In August 1944 these instructions were amended to permit the granting of visas, within the limits of existing quotas, to children arriving from Hungary as well as from France. 2/

Admission of Children to Portugal Assured. In May 1944 the Portuguese Foreign Office, in view of this Government's guarantees with respect to the maintenance of refugees while in Portugal and their ultimate removal to Palestine, the United States, or to some other destination, agreed in principle to the Board's request that Portugal admit a considerable number of children under 16 years of age coming from France via Spain into Portugal, even though these children lacked proper travel documents and were without visas for Portugal. As a practical matter, it was agreed that the number of such children admitted to Portugal would be limited to 300 at any one time. It was also agreed that Portuguese authorities would, through the United States Embassy at Lisbon, be furnished with as complete data as possible concerning each such child prior to its proposed entry into Portugal, such data to include the name, age, birthplace, and nationality of parents.

At the same time Board Representative Dexter indicated that he planned to use Board funds to pay a part of the costs of a reception center for refugees which the World Jewish Congress was about to establish. 3/

1/ Cable No. 1017 to Lisbon dated April 12, 1944; the instructions cabled Minister Norweb were similar to those sent Ambassador Hayes, which appear as document 139.

2/ See Rescue from Hungary.

3/ Cable No. 1367 from Lisbon dated May 6, 1944, comprising document 148; see also Dispatch No. 494 from Lisbon dated May 10, 1944.



Upon learning of Board Representative Dexter's plan to spend Board funds in this manner, the Board immediately advised him that, inasmuch as the Joint Distribution Committee was licensed and already had substantial funds available to carry on a rescue program from Portugal and since the World Jewish Congress had applied for a similar license, the Board expected to rely on such established private organizations as these for the financing of rescue projects unless and until private sources proved inadequate. 1/

Funds advanced by Board Representative Dexter to help establish a children's reception center in a beach resort six miles from Lisbon were thus later repaid by the World Jewish Congress.

Conflict in Rescue Operations Resolved. Certain proposals on the part of the World Jewish Congress representative in Portugal concerning the eventual destinations of refugee children arriving there from France had also been brought to the attention of the Board. 2/ The Board had in turn indicated its conviction that the problem of where to send the children who were being rescued - that is, whether they should receive Palestine certificates or Canadian or United States visas - should not be allowed to interfere with the smooth functioning of rescue operations but should be determined after they had reached safety, on an individual basis as well as on the basis of facilities existing at that time. 3/

In view of the apparent conflict between the operations of the World Jewish Congress and the Joint Distribution Committee in these rescue operations, James H. Mann, Assistant Executive Director of the Board, was sent to Lisbon in May 1944 for a short visit of inspection, to confer with Board Representative Dexter and with representatives of both organizations.

Differences between the World Jewish Congress and the Joint Distribution Committee had arisen over the eventual destinations of the children rescued in the first groups from France through Spain, as well as with respect to the kind of training these

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- 1/ Cable No. 1289 to Lisbon dated May 8, 1944, comprising document 149.
  - 2/ Cable No. 1168 from Lisbon dated April 19, 1944, comprising document 150; see also Cables No. 1410 and 1447 from Lisbon dated May 10 and 13 and Dispatch No. 531 from Lisbon, undated.
  - 3/ Cable No. 1229 to Lisbon dated May 1, 1944, comprising document 151.

children should receive pending their evacuation from Portugal. The World Jewish Congress later set up its own reception center and, working through the Portuguese police, had this center designated as the fixed residence for all children entering Portugal clandestinely.

An agreement was finally worked out settling the fundamental differences involved, eliminating the competition for guides through the Pyrenees as well as the duplication of reception facilities. Since the children evacuated had been told that they were going to Palestine and since members of the French underground who had arranged for their departure had done so with this understanding, it was agreed by the agencies concerned that an effort would be made to evacuate all the children to Palestine except those with relatives in the United States. 1/

Although the World Jewish Congress representative named in this agreement subsequently rejected appointment to the rescue committee set up in the agreement and refused to be bound by it, the Allied military situation had so improved by that time that this action did not affect the over-all rescue program. 2/

Belgian Cooperation Assured. Minister Norweb had meanwhile asked the Board to approach the Belgian Government-in-Exile for the purpose of facilitating cooperation on the part of representatives of the Belgian Convention in rescuing adults and children from occupied territory. 3/ The Board therefore cabled Charge d' Affaires Schoenfeld in London, asking that such representations be made on the matter. 4/ Although Belgian Missions had already been instructed to cooperate fully in this Government's rescue and relief operations, the Belgian Foreign Office indicated that it would again communicate with its Legation in Lisbon in order to insure complete cooperation on the part of Belgian representatives there. 5/

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1/ Memorandum dated July 13, 1944, comprising document 152 ; see also account of the visit of James Mann to Spain and Portugal dated August 30, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2613 from Lisbon dated August 24, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1292 from Lisbon dated April 28, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 3735 to London dated May 10, 1944.

5/ Cable No. Belge 5 from London dated May 15, 1944.

Portuguese Foreign Office Was Kept Informed. In the course of the Board's operation, Ambassador Norweb was furnished, for transmission to the Portuguese Foreign Office, the text of the statement made in March 1944 by President Roosevelt condemning the persecution of innocent persons and calling upon the free peoples of the world to assist in the rescue of such victims, the text of the Roosevelt message concerning the removal of refugees from southern Italy to Oswego, the text of the resolution of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs concerning the Hungarian persecutions, and the text of Archbishop Spellman's statement on the persecutions in Hungary. 1/

Escape of Prominent Hungarian Jews to Portugal. During the last week in June 1944 a group of 32 Hungarian Jews arrived in Lisbon, including a number of prominent capitalists and industrialists. The group was said to have come from Berlin via Lufthansa planes; passports had been given them only after they reached Barcelona. Spanish and Portuguese visas, the latter issued at Berlin, were said to have been affixed to these passports. Ambassador Norweb indicated that Portuguese authorities were interning the entire group.

Various rumors were current and a great deal of mystery surrounded the presence of the group in Portugal. Some of the rumors suggested that the Germans allowed this group of prominent Jews to leave in order to arrange peace terms through influential Jewish leaders in Great Britain and the United States. With respect to such rumors, Ambassador Norweb indicated that they might be intended to create suspicion and foster misunderstanding in Moscow in an effort to create a schism between Russia and other Allied Nations. 2/

A subsequent report received by the Board from Minister Johnson in Stockholm apparently referred to this same group of escaped persons. According to information given to the dissident Hungarian Legation in Stockholm by a traveler who left Budapest in July 1944, the Germans had given the members of a prominent Jewish family permission to leave Hungary for a neutral destination with all of their valuables except jewelry, in return for which the family handed over all of their factories and, in addition, paid the Germans a considerable sum in Swiss francs. It was indicated that the transaction took place without the knowledge of the Hungarian authorities, who therefore resented it, and that Hungarian Jews were also embittered by the case. 3/

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- 1/ See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.
  - 2/ Cable No. 2054 from Lisbon dated July 1, 1944.
  - 3/ Cable No. 2974 from Stockholm dated August 6, 1944.

Assistance through the Blockade. In July 1944, the Board proposed to United States Missions abroad that joint Anglo-American approaches be made to the various European neutrals, including Portugal, for the purpose of appealing for even more liberal policies in connection with the reception and care of refugees from Axis territory. To encourage such policies, the neutral governments were to be assured that this Government and the British would arrange for the provision of additional food and other supplies to meet the added burden resulting from the temporary care of refugees, as well as funds if needed, and that efforts would be made to arrange for the onward movement of the refugees so accepted. 1/

Portuguese Cooperation Requested in Satellite Rescue Program. Toward the end of July 1944 Portugal and other neutral European countries were asked to permit the entrance of certain categories of persons for whom United States immigration visas had been authorized after July 1, 1944; special instructions authorizing the issuance of United States visas to such persons were sent by the State Department to United States consular officers in these countries. A short time later United States consular officers in neutral European countries were also authorized to issue immigration visas to certain categories of close relatives of American citizens and of resident aliens entitled to nonquota or preference quota immigration status. 2/

In response to the representations made by Ambassador Norweb along these lines, the Portuguese Foreign Office replied that, despite its own sympathy with the humanitarian aims which prompted formulation of the United States Government's visa program for endangered persons, it would be impossible to admit refugees in these classifications without more effective guarantees from the United States that all of these people, whether issued United States visas or not, would be speedily removed from Portugal. 3/

In response to this attitude of the Portuguese Foreign Office, which obviously arose from a fear that the end of the war would result in a decline in United States interest, the

- 1/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.
- 2/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: United States Visas.
- 3/ Cable No. 2864 from Lisbon dated September 14, 1944, comprising document 153.



Board asked Ambassador Norweb to emphasize that this Government had already given assurances that it would arrange for the maintenance in Portugal and for the removal to the United States or to other areas outside Portugal of all refugees admitted to Portugal in accordance with the terms of the Board's proposals; Ambassador Norweb was asked to reiterate the firm intention of this Government to fulfill these commitments. 1/

Release of Refugees from Portuguese Imprisonment. In July 1944 the United States Embassy in Lisbon presented a note to the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking that Portugal consider releasing to places of fixed residence all genuine refugees who had been imprisoned because of their entrance into Portugal without the proper papers and visas. A similar note was understood to have been dispatched by the British Embassy in Lisbon. On its part, the United States Embassy indicated that upon being advised of such intended releases, it would arrange with private agencies for the support of all bona fide victims of Axis oppression released and for their ultimate emigration. 2/ No blanket releases were ever made, however, in response to this proposal.

Efforts To Evacuate Republican Refugees to Mexico. 3/ In February 1944 the Unitarian Service Committee presented to the Board for its approval a project involving the rescue of certain Spanish Republican and other refugees in hiding in Portugal. These refugees were said to be in constant danger of being returned to Spain and executed, if found; but more compelling from the Board's point of view was the thought that the evacuation of such persons would relieve the whole refugee situation in Portugal and open the way for the entrance into Portugal, clandestine or otherwise, of substantial numbers of victims of Nazi persecution.

According to information subsequently furnished by the Unitarians, the President of Mexico personally agreed to the issuance of 500 Mexican residence visas for these persons, the visas to be issued by the Mexican Minister in Lisbon at his discretion. If United States transit visas and the necessary transportation could be obtained for these persons, it was thought that their prompt evacuation to Mexico could be accomplished.

- 1/ Cable No. 2656 to Lisbon dated October 3, 1944, comprising document 154.
- 2/ Dispatch No. 760 from Lisbon dated July 21, 1944.
- 3/ See also Rescue Programs; Other Projects.

The Unitarians proposed to arrange for their transportation by means of Portuguese ships to the United States and thence by rail to Mexico, and guaranteed to arrange the necessary financing.

Protracted discussions were held with the State Department in this connection, following which the Board on June 24, 1944 cabled Ambassador Norweb and Board Representative Dexter in Lisbon for a prompt report as to the manner in which the granting of United States transit visas could best be accomplished for these refugees, in view of the danger to the applicants if they should be apprehended by the International Police before they were in possession of both Mexican residence and United States transit visas. 1/

At the same time the State Department asked Lisbon to forward certain detailed information with respect to each of the refugees for whom transit certificates were sought. The State Department indicated that, upon receipt of this information, an effort would be made to process the cases within one week. If no objections were made, United States consular officers in Portugal would be authorized to grant transit certificates, provided no objection developed on security grounds and provided the applicants first secured Mexican visas. In case the submission of photographs proved impracticable, the State Department indicated that this requirement might be waived, subject to the submission of photographs after the issuance of transit certificates and subject to the furnishing of fingerprints. Certain other requirements usually made of applicants for transit certificates were also waived because of the dangers involved in the regular procedure for fugitive applicants. 2/

On June 28, 1944, Ambassador Norweb reported that the Mexican Legation in Lisbon had not yet received instructions from Mexico with respect to the granting of visas for the refugees concerned, though it had already begun the preparation of lists. 3/

1/ Cable No. 1819 to Lisbon dated June 24, 1944, comprising document 155.

2/ Cable No. 1820 to Lisbon dated June 24, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 2009 from Lisbon dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 156.

Upon being advised that the newly appointed Mexican Minister to Portugal had been given full authority to grant the visas involved to persons approved by him, presumably without prior reference to Mexico City, the Board asked that Ambassador Norweb and Board Representative Dexter confirm this understanding as soon as possible after the new Minister's arrival in Lisbon. 1/

The authority of the Mexican Minister in Lisbon to issue all the visas in question did not materialize, however. At the outset, 11 Mexican visas were authorized, but delays were encountered in getting United States transit visas for these 11 persons, despite the promise of the State Department that such cases would be processed within a week. Board Representative Dexter feared that this would create a bad impression on the Mexican Legation and might discourage the granting of further visas. 2/

In response to a memorandum from the Board requesting that everything possible be done to obviate delays in the granting of transit visas, the State Department indicated that the delay in these initial authorizations had been occasioned in part by the fact that the messages were sent by airgram; arrangements were made to communicate by telegraph in future cases in order to expedite action. 3/

After United States transit visas had been obtained, serious difficulties were also encountered with the Portuguese police with respect to exit visas for the persons involved. 4/

Meanwhile the situation of Spanish Republican refugees in Portugal became more precarious. Arrests and imprisonment occurred and a general roundup for deportations was thought likely. 5/

- 1/ Cable No. 2007 to Lisbon dated July 17, 1944, comprising document 157.
- 2/ Cable No. 2876 from Lisbon dated September 14, 1944.
- 3/ Letter to the State Department dated September 22, 1944, and letter from the State Department dated October 9, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 2938 from Lisbon dated September 20, 1944.
- 5/ Cables No. 3225 and 3935 from Lisbon dated October 23 and November 13, 1944.

Early in 1945, at the instance of a member of the United States Embassy, the Mexican Minister requested the Foreign Office in Mexico City to authorize the issuance in Lisbon of at least 100 visas in the hope of being able to evacuate immediately Spanish Republicans in the greatest danger. 1/

Intergovernmental Committee Asked To Assume Responsibility.

In March 1945, the Board cabled Ambassador Winant in London to call the attention of the Intergovernmental Committee to the plight of these refugees and asked that the Committee be requested to take over from private agencies in Portugal the maintenance of this group as part of its over-all program on the Iberian Peninsula. The Committee also was urged to arrange for the speedy evacuation of the refugees in question from Portugal to other places of safety. 2/

Venezuelan Refuge Arranged. Arrangements were meanwhile begun by the Unitarians for the transportation of a number of these refugees to Venezuela, and efforts were initiated to obtain the United States transit visas needed. 3/

Rescue Operations through Portugal Discontinued. On August 24, 1944, the Board advised Ambassador Norweb and Board Representative Dexter that in view of the success of Allied forces in reoccupying France, no further efforts should be made to evacuate children or adults from France through Spain to Portugal or elsewhere. Both the World Jewish Congress and the Joint Distribution Committee concurred in the Board's decision that this program should be discontinued. 4/

Following the discontinuance of rescue operations through Portugal, Board Representative Dexter indicated that the remaining problems incident to the work of the Board could be disposed

1/ Dispatch No. 1475 from Lisbon dated February 14, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 2451 to London dated March 29, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 926 from Lisbon dated April 28, 1945; see also Dispatch No. 18 from Lisbon dated April 18, 1945.

4/ Cable No. 2331 to Lisbon dated August 24, 1944, comprising document 146.



of in two or three months and that any functions still required could then be carried on by the regular Embassy Staff. 1/ Dr. Dexter's operations in Portugal as Special Representative of the Board were thus concluded on November 30, 1944. 2/

Plans for Refugees Still in Portugal. As efforts were begun to wind up the work of the Board in Portugal, information was requested by the United States Embassy in Lisbon as to what plans had been made with respect to refugees still in Portugal. While it was not possible to give the exact number of such refugees, the Embassy reported that there were approximately 700 persons from the various European countries who were being assisted by the four private American agencies dispensing out-right relief in Portugal, namely, the American Friends Service Committee, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Unitarians, and the Catholic Refugee Relief Section. These 700 were in addition to several hundred Spanish Republican refugees, plus a small number of other refugees who were receiving aid from their respective consulates. While there was no legal obligation, either on the part of this Government or the governments of any of the other United Nations with respect to these 700 persons, Ambassador Norweb suggested that there might be some moral obligation to accomplish their evacuation before the withdrawal of the Board's representative from Portugal. The tentative suggestion was advanced that these refugees be removed to Camp Lyautey in North Africa. 3/

In response to this recommendation, the Board pointed out to Ambassador Norweb that few of the refugees to which reference was made had been admitted to Portugal at the request of the Board. The few refugees so admitted were being cared for by the Joint Distribution Committee or by one of the other private agencies, which had also charged themselves with the responsibility for the ultimate evacuation of these refugees from Portugal; the Joint Distribution Committee when asked about its future plans with respect to the 400 or 500 refugees then under its care in Portugal, indicated that it had no intention of withdrawing such support or of discontinuing its efforts to find a permanent home for these people. In view of these guarantees

1/ Cable No. 2657 from Lisbon dated August 29, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 3005 to Lisbon dated November 21, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 1071 from Lisbon dated October 16, 1944; comprising document 158.

by the Joint Distribution Committee and in view of the fact that the Portuguese Government did not appear to be pressing for the evacuation of these refugees, the Board advised Ambassador Norweb that it was not prepared at that time to recommend their transfer to Camp Lyautey. 1/

Survey of Refugees Undertaken. Early in 1945 private relief agencies providing maintenance for refugees in Spain and Portugal began work on a survey to determine the number and kinds of stateless refugees and the number and kinds of repatriables there. This survey was preliminary to asking the Intergovernmental Committee, which had funds as well as jurisdiction, to assume the financial obligation of maintaining these refugees, as well as the ultimate resettlement and repatriation of the respective groups.

The Board also learned that the British Foreign Office had declared its belief that it would be best that the refugees then in Portugal remain there until it became necessary to remove them. This decision, which was said to be shared by the Intergovernmental Committee, was apparently at least partially predicated on the belief that the problem might solve itself in time. The British were also under the impression that the camp at Fedhala had been closed and that the receptive capacity of the only other alternative, the camp at Philippeville, was only 300 persons and was completely filled. 2/

For the information of the Embassy in dealing with this situation, the Board indicated that actually, accommodations could be provided by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration at Philippeville for 7,000 or 8,000 persons if tents were used in addition to barracks, and that existing barracks could shelter between 2,000 and 3,000 persons. 3/

Following completion of the survey by private relief agencies, the British and the United States Governments approved the proposed expenditure of £200,000 by the Intergovern-

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1/ Letter to Ambassador Norweb dated November 10, 1944, comprising document 159.

2/ Dispatch No. 1319 from Lisbon dated January 6, 1945.

3/ Airgram No. A-175 to Lisbon dated February 22, 1945.

mental Committee for 1945 in connection with its program to assume responsibility on May 1, 1945, for some 2,000 refugees of other than Spanish and Portuguese nationalities, about 1,200 in Spain and 800 in Portugal. 1/ In the meantime, reversing the former position of the Committee that the refugees in Portugal should remain there until it became necessary to remove them, the Director of the Intergovernmental Committee expressed the view that high priority should be given in due course to the removal and resettlement of the refugees in the Iberian Peninsula. 2/

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1/ Cable No. 3491 to London dated May 3, 1945; see also Airgram No. A-159 from London dated February 17, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 4054 from London dated April 20, 1945.

## II G. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE FROM HUNGARY

Prior to Germany's military occupation of Hungary in March 1944, Hungary was the only refuge for Jews in Axis Europe. Although anti-Jewish laws had been on the Hungarian statute books since as early as 1938, their enforcement and the condition of the Jews in Hungary were such as to invite the clandestine immigration of tens of thousands of Jews from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania. The Jewish population of Hungary was thus swelled to more than 800,000. The refugees were cared for by the native Jewish population, who tried to see to it that no large numbers of newcomers congregated in any one place. The movement was so large, however, that it was undoubtedly known of and condoned by Hungarian authorities.

During the first month of the Board's existence, the clandestine movement of Jews from Poland and Czechoslovakia was still under way and the Board facilitated the efforts of private agencies to increase the traffic to Hungary as a place of relative safety.<sup>1/</sup> In connection with these efforts to enable persons to flee to Hungary and, later, to escape from Hungary and the Balkans to safety elsewhere, substantial amounts of money were remitted by private American organizations, particularly to Switzerland and to Sweden, under appropriate Treasury licenses, to finance the operations involved.<sup>2/</sup>

In the early days of the Board's existence Hungary also served as an important source of food for the International Red Cross and other relief organizations to distribute to persecuted groups in concentration camps in German-controlled areas. On the Board's recommendation, Treasury licenses were issued to permit the purchase of Hungarian foodstuffs for such purposes.<sup>3/</sup>

There were, however, lapses in the Hungarian Government's passive attitude. It was reported that during 1941, for example, a substantial number of Jews from Poland and Hungarian-born Jews of

- <sup>1/</sup> See also Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecution for an account of early efforts of the Board to stem persecution and deportations in Hungary.
- <sup>2/</sup> See especially Rescue to and through Switzerland, Rescue to and through Sweden, Rescue from Rumania, and Rescue from Czechoslovakia
- <sup>3/</sup> See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).



Polish origin but of uncertain nationality were rounded up, some being deported to Poland and others detained in concentration camps. It was also reported that in December 1943 the Germans began to press Hungary to adopt a stricter anti-Jewish policy. Late in February 1944 word reached the Board that Hungary was yielding to German pressure to deport foreign Jews and to close its borders to refugees from Poland and elsewhere.

Early Measures and Attempts To Get Facts. The Board's intense interest in getting the facts of the Hungarian situation was communicated at an early date to the neutral European governments and to various public and private agencies. Early in March 1944 the Board also asked key United States Missions abroad to communicate to Hungarian and other satellite authorities, through channels known to be available, a message expressing this Government's disapproval of continued collaboration in such persecution and warning them of the consequences that would follow.<sup>1/</sup>

On March 19, 1944, however, the German military occupied Hungary and the following days witnessed the creation of a Nazi puppet government, one of whose avowed purposes was to make Hungary Judenrein. Five days later President Roosevelt publicly condemned the Nazi policy of exterminating Jews and other civilian populations, referring particularly to Hungary and warning that all those who took any part in such persecutions would be punished for their crimes. With the cooperation of the Office of War Information, this statement and others condemning the Nazi atrocities, along with various appeals to Hungarians "of good will" to oppose the Nazi persecutions, were repeatedly broadcast to Axis Europe. The British and Soviet Governments were urged by the Board to cooperate in this psychological warfare program, as a result of which the British, in particular, helped materially to expand the radio coverage of messages directed to the continent.<sup>2/</sup>

Cooperation of International Red Cross Solicited. On the theory that the presence of foreigners in official or unofficial capacities would have a deterrent effect, the Board, late in March 1944, addressed a request to the International Red Cross to send effective representation to Hungary in order to protect the well-being of groups there facing persecution.<sup>3/</sup> In response to this request, the Red Cross declined to send any such special delegation on the ground that such a mission might be considered as inconsistent with its traditional functions.<sup>4/</sup>

1/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through Neutral Countries.

2/ See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

3/ Cable No. 1023 to Bern dated March 27, 1944, comprising document 160.

4/ Cable No. 2312 from Bern dated April 13, 1944.

At the Board's instigation, however, the Ankara representative of the International Red Cross spoke with German Ambassador von Papen in Ankara, who was said to have agreed to recommend to the German Government that restraint be exercised in its treatment of the Jews in Hungary. 1/

In response to another request addressed to the International Red Cross for whatever information could be obtained concerning the Jewish situation in Hungary, arrangements were made for relaying to the Board the substance of reports received from the Budapest representative of the Red Cross concerning Hungarian developments. 2/

Cooperation of Vatican Also Sought. On March 24, 1944, the Board sent a copy of the statement issued by President Roosevelt to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington and asked him to urge that the Holy See take action toward influencing the people and Governments of Hungary and Rumania to protect the Jewish population of those countries. In accordance with this request, the Holy See instructed its representatives in Hungary and Rumania to do everything possible for the relief of victims of Axis persecution in those countries. In June 1944 these instructions were followed by a personal appeal from the Pope to Hungarian Regent Horthy, calling for tolerance in the treatment of minority groups in Hungary, to which the Regent was said to have responded favorably. 3/ A stirring statement by Archbishop Spellman of New York likewise proved helpful in connection with the Board's campaign to halt the persecution of Jews and other minorities in Hungary. 4/

Second Warning Addressed to Hungarian Authorities. Meanwhile reports continued to arrive indicating that German pressure on Hungary was being intensified. In April 1944 a second informal warning was therefore sent to Hungarian authorities through the United States Legation at Lisbon, reiterating that any action to inflict new and further persecutions or to continue existing persecutions directed against foreign or native Jews, or any further deportations, would be considered by this Government with the greatest disfavor and would be taken into account at the end of the war. 5/

- 1/ Cable No. 596 from Ankara dated April 4, 1944, comprising document 161.
- 2/ Cable No. 895 from Ankara dated May 18, 1944.
- 3/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecution: Appeals through the Vatican.
- 4/ See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.
- 5/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecution: Appeals through Neutral Countries.

Attempts to Increase Flow of Refugees through Yugoslavia. In view of the rising tide of persecution, all avenues for escape were explored. The most promising clandestine route at the time appeared to be through that portion of Yugoslav territory occupied by the Partisan forces of Marshal Tito. Consequently, one of the Board's representatives discussed at length the feasibility of such an escape route with representatives of Marshal Tito as well as with British and United States military authorities in Italy. As a result of this discussion and of approaches made to Marshal Tito by the British, a promise of Partisan support in rescuing Hungarian Jews was obtained. In addition, the Board made arrangements for the sending of private funds to Italy to facilitate rescue operations through Yugoslav territory and across the Adriatic to southern Italy. 1/

Emigration through Turkey to Palestine. The possibility of escape through emigration was also explored and proved more productive. Since there was reason to believe that persons with Turkish transit visas and Palestine immigration certificates would be able to obtain Rumanian and Bulgarian transit visas, the Turkish Government was prevailed upon to facilitate the departure of Jews from Hungary by issuing Turkish transit visas in considerable numbers. Rumanian authorities later set up a new bureau to facilitate the emigration of Jews, and through the efforts of the Board private funds were made available to finance the evacuation from Rumanian ports of large numbers of endangered persons bound for Palestine by way of Turkey. Largely as the result of personal intervention on the part of Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara, the Turkish Government provided transportation facilities to the Syrian border for those reaching Turkey in this manner. 2/

The Board meanwhile extended its facilities fully for the transmission of applications for Palestine certificates to persons in Hungary. Efforts in this direction, however, received a severe set-back early in 1944. Ambassador Steinhardt, noting that no Jewish refugees had arrived from Hungary during the latter part of April 1944, invited the attention of the Turkish Foreign Office to this fact and inquired as to whether the Turkish Consul in Budapest was for any reason withholding the granting of Turkish visas. As a result of this inquiry, Ambassador Steinhardt learned that the Turk Consul at Budapest had sent the Foreign Office word that every Jew who entered the Turkish Consulate in Budapest for the purpose of applying for a Turkish visa had been arrested as soon as he left and transported to an unknown destination. 3/

The Board later suggested that the Turks be asked to allow refugees to enter Turkey without transit visas, but Ambassador

1/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

2/ See Rescue from Rumania and Rescue to and through Turkey.

3/ Cable No. 794 from Ankara dated May 2, 1944, comprising document 162.



Steinhardt felt that obtaining Turkish concurrence on this proposition would be virtually impossible.<sup>1/</sup>

Special Efforts To Obtain Releases. While pursuing its efforts to influence Hungarian authorities by official and unofficial pressure and to aid in the escape of Jews from Hungary, the Board did not neglect the possibility of enlisting the self-interest of individual German and Hungarian officials in a position to alleviate the fate of Jews. For example, in April of 1944, in cooperation with a private agency, steps were taken to establish contact with an individual in Bratislava who was reported to have been successful in arresting the deportation of Jews from Slovakia. An intermediary in Switzerland was asked to explore with him the possibility of arranging for evacuations from Hungary to neutral countries or for holding up deportations or permitting the sending of relief to those detained. A second effort along such lines was made three months later with the assistance of a prominent Hungarian in this country.<sup>2/</sup>

Still another less conventional possibility of rescue was explored. On various occasions, upon learning the names of certain individuals in Hungary who might be able to assist in the temporary hiding of Jews in that country, the Board cabled these names to Stockholm and Bern for transmission to members of the underground in Hungary, for whatever use could be made of them.

German-Inspired Proposals To Save the Jews of Hungary. On the other hand, various proposals were received through neutral countries suggesting certain concessions by the Allied Governments in return for a cessation on the part of the Germans of the Hungarian deportations and slaughter. Most, if not all, of these propositions were felt to be of dubious reliability. Nevertheless, it was the Board's policy to avoid outright rejection of any of the proposals, however fantastic, as a means of stalling for time and in the hope that some valid and acceptable proposal might be received. It eventually became clear, however, that the Germans were willing to let the Jews go only on totally unacceptable terms, that is, in exchange for such articles as trucks, tractors, machine tools, and similar material to support the German war effort.

Protection Provided by Means of Latin American Documents. One of the most successful steps taken to insure the safety of Jews in Hungary was the extension to Hungary of this Government's

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1010 from Ankara dated June 5, 1944, comprising document 163.

<sup>2/</sup> See Special Negotiations.



emphatic demand that persons in German-controlled territory holding documents issued in the name of any American republic, or otherwise claiming the nationality of an American republic, be accorded all the rights and privileges of such nationals unless and until the government whose nationality was claimed denied the validity of such documents or claims. 1/

Hungarian Deportations Begun. Despite these early efforts of the Board, a communication received early in May 1944 from the United States Embassy in London, based on information obtained from London representatives of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, confirmed previous reports that the deportation of Jews from Hungary and territories under its control had begun. By that time some 24,000 persons had been deported from Sub-Carpatho Russia, in addition to the general deportation of Polish refugees seized by the Hungarian police. 2/ This report was rapidly followed by word from other sources that the deportation of Jews from Hungary was being pursued relentlessly and with attendant brutalities.

Efforts Made To Obtain Further Information. In cables to the various neutral European capitals the Board on May 23, 1944, indicated this Government's grave concern over these developments. United States Missions were asked to request the authorities of the various governments to which they were accredited to obtain as soon as possible detailed information from their missions in Budapest concerning the treatment of Jews in Hungary. 3/

Expansion of Diplomatic and Consular Staffs Urged. Since it was felt that the lives of some 800,000 persons in Hungary might well depend on the restraint resulting from the mere presence in that country of the largest possible number of foreign observers, these same United States Missions were asked to make representations designed to induce the various governments to which they were accredited to take immediate steps to expand their respective diplomatic and consular staffs in Hungary and to distribute such personnel as widely as possible throughout the country. It was hoped that such diplomatic and consular representatives would be able to persuade individuals and officials to desist from further barbarisms. 4/

- 1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.
- 2/ Cable No. 3641 from London dated May 4, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 1786 to Bern dated May 23, 1944, comprising document 164. repeated on the same date to Lisbon, Madrid, Ankara, Stockholm, and Vatican City.
- 4/ Cable No. 1805 to Bern dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 165; repeated on the same date to Lisbon, Ankara, and Stockholm; repeated on the following day to Madrid.

Sweden Complied with Board's Request. The Swedish Foreign Office, complying with the Board's request, appointed as its Special Attaché to the Swedish Legation at Budapest Raoul Wallenberg, a prominent Swedish businessman, who was instructed to follow and report on the situation in Hungary, particularly the persecution of Jews and other minority groups.<sup>1/</sup>

The Board was invited to make suggestions as to the activities of the new attaché and his staff, in response to which a proposed program was promptly outlined and forwarded to Stockholm.<sup>2/</sup> Arrangements were made to communicate through the Swedish Foreign Office with Mr. Wallenberg when he reached Budapest. It was thus possible for the Board to keep reliably and currently informed, via diplomatic channels, on developments in Hungary. Since it was felt that money and favorable post-war considerations might motivate action impeding, relaxing, or slowing down the tempo of persecution and might help permit escapes, the new attaché was urged by the Board to ascertain in just what quarters such inducements might be effective.

Board Representative Olsen in Stockholm meanwhile was instructed to lend every possible assistance to the Swedish attaché. The Board also arranged to place at the disposal of Representative Olsen substantial funds provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which were later used by Mr. Wallenberg to accomplish seemingly impossible feats of rescue and relief in Hungary against overwhelming odds.<sup>3/</sup>

Shortly after the arrival in Budapest of the new Swedish attaché and his staff, several thousand persons were placed under effective Swedish protection.<sup>4/</sup> Food and other relief supplies

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 2231 from Stockholm dated June 21, 1944, comprising document 166. See Rescue to and through Sweden; see also Cable No. 1010 to Stockholm dated May 25, 1944, and Cable No. 2069 from Stockholm dated June 9, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1353 to Stockholm dated July 7, 1944; comprising document 167; see also Cable No. 1349 to Stockholm dated July 6, 1944.
- <sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Sweden. Mutually congratulatory letters were later exchanged by Mr. Wallenberg and the Board; see letter from Board Representative Olsen dated November 14, 1944, comprising document 168, and letter to Minister Johnson in Stockholm dated December 6, 1944, comprising document 169.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 2779 from Stockholm dated July 25, 1944; see also Cable No. 3811 from Stockholm dated September 22, 1944, and Cable No. 891 from Stockholm dated March 7, 1945.

were later acquired in Hungary for needy Jewish groups, both within and outside newly established Swedish houses of protection. 1/

Proposal To Enlarge Neutral Personnel Unsuccessful in Other Quarters. Switzerland was never persuaded to increase its diplomatic personnel in Hungary. 2/

Ambassador Hayes meanwhile informed the Board that although the Spanish Foreign Office had, at his request, agreed to instruct Spanish diplomatic personnel in Budapest to be as active there as possible, in the hope that their presence might have a deterring effect on the Germans, he felt it useless to suggest that additional personnel be sent to Hungary, especially since such action would be against Spain's policy of minimizing its connections with the Hungarian regime. 3/

Minister Norweb pointed out that as a result of having made fairly strong representations, following the invasion of Hungary, seeking to persuade the Portuguese Government not to recognize the puppet government in Budapest, he felt that it would be inappropriate for him to approach the Portuguese Government at that time with respect to enlarging the Portuguese mission in Hungary. Even aside from this consideration, Minister Norweb voiced grave doubts that the Germans would allow any such increase at that time. 4/

Hungarian-Turkish relations were virtually non-existent at that time, according to a cable from Ambassador Steinhardt. This strain was said to have resulted from the Turkish Government's having materially reduced the shipment of strategic materials to Hungary, at the request of the Allies. The Turkish Government therefore felt that it was in no position to ask the Hungarian Government for permission to expand the Turkish diplomatic force in Hungary. Moreover, Turkish authorities were convinced that such request would be refused. 5/

Renewed Appeal to Red Cross Successful. As of May 1944 the International Red Cross had only one representative in Hungary, and this representative had gone to Budapest not as a Red Cross delegate but in his capacity as Director of the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Hungary since it had been feared that his going in the former capacity would have delayed his receipt of a German visa. Under date of May 25, 1944, the Board therefore asked that Board Representative McClelland again appeal to the Red Cross, along somewhat the same lines as those on which neutral governments were being approached, in the hope that the Red Cross would reconsider its previous decision not to send a special delegation to Hungary. Emphasis was placed upon the Board's conviction that the persistent

1/ Cable No. 3884 from Stockholm dated September 26, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 4045 from Bern dated June 24, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1943 from Madrid dated June 1, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 1671 from Lisbon dated June 1, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 977 from Ankara dated May 29, 1944.



reports concerning systematic mass extermination of Jews in Hungary made immediate enlargement of the Red Cross delegation in Budapest and throughout Hungary, especially in the localities in which Jews were being concentrated, an elementary humanitarian obligation.<sup>1/</sup>

As a result of the Board's repeated requests, the Red Cross eventually enlarged its representation in Hungary.<sup>2/</sup>

Approach Proposed to Hungarian Minister in Ankara. In line with its determination to pursue every possible means of halting the Hungarian persecutions, the Board early in June 1944 advanced to Ambassador Steinhardt still another proposal. This time it was suggested that the Hungarian Minister in Ankara be approached in an effort to restrain the Hungarian Government in its persecution of Jews.<sup>3/</sup> Ambassador Steinhardt, however, felt that such action would be of no use whatever, in view of what he described as the well-known pro-Nazi attitude of the Hungarian Minister and his staff.<sup>4/</sup>

Increased Persecutions Noted. Meanwhile, according to reliable information which reached the Board from Bern toward the end of May 1944, steps being taken in Hungary were unmistakable preliminaries to further mass deportation and extermination of the Jewish population, especially in the Carpatho-Russian and Maramaros regions.<sup>5/</sup> The number of persons immediately involved was said to be about 200,000, with all signs pointing to the extension of such actions to the Jewish population in Hungary proper.

The lot of the Jews in improvised Hungarian camps to which they had been confined was said to be wretched. The cattle markets, tile factories, and wood yards used as camps were reported to be almost completely devoid of sanitary facilities. In many instances, thousands of men, women, and children, along with the sick and the aged, were forced to live in the open under frightfully overcrowded and degrading conditions. Since the persons confined had been permitted to take nothing with them in the way of blankets or covers, it became tragically obvious that a great many of them would die from exposure as well as from disease and slow starvation, even before they were jammed into cattle cars for deportation.

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1806 to Bern dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 170; see also Cable No. 3731 from Bern dated June 11, 1944, and Cable No. 2103 to Bern dated June 19, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 4896 from Bern dated July 29, 1944, comprising document 171.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 499 to Ankara dated June 2, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 1010 from Ankara dated June 5, 1944.
- <sup>5/</sup> See, for example, Cable No. 3346 from Bern dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 172.



In June 1944 Board Representative McClelland reported that there no longer remained any doubt that the majority of the Jewish population east of the Danube, especially in eastern, northern, and northeastern Hungary, had been deported to Poland. Figures received from various reliable independent sources indicated that at least 335,000 Jews had already been deported from Sub-Carpathian and Ruthenian areas, from Transylvania, and from the Tisz region; some 350,000 Jews remained in Budapest and environs.

Prior to the deportations there were said to have been two weeks to a month of brutal concentration, during which thousands of Jews were crowded together in primitive quarters without sufficient food, clothing, or water and without respect to health, sex, or age. Hungarian gendarmes were said to have carried out this action. The names of individuals in the Hungarian Government who were said to bear the major responsibility for these persecutions were also forwarded.<sup>1/</sup>

Swedish Reports on Conditions in Hungary. Official reports on the situation in Hungary were not lacking. The Swedish Foreign Office, in particular, materially aided the development of the Board's program by constantly making available to Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen, in strict confidence, the substance of various official reports received from Swedish diplomatic personnel in Hungary. On June 17, 1944, for example, Minister Johnson relayed to the Board from Stockholm the principal features of a summary of conditions in Hungary prepared by the Swedish Foreign Office on the basis of information received from the Swedish Minister in Hungary. The substance of this official report substantiated word previously received concerning cruelty, torture, murders, and suicides.<sup>2/</sup>

The Board later received from Stockholm a translation of a detailed memorandum furnished by the Swedish Foreign Office with respect to the discriminatory regulations that had been applied in Hungary to all Jews, whether Jewish or Christian by religion. (In this connection it was estimated that 35 percent of the Jews in Budapest were Christian.)

The Swedish memorandum stated unequivocally that the lives of the bulk of Hungarian Jews were in danger. Hungary was reported to have obtained permission from German authorities to

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 4041 from Bern dated June 24, 1944, comprising document 173; see also Cable No. 4170 from Bern dated June 30, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2187 from Stockholm dated June 17, 1944, comprising document 174.

retain 150,000 male Jews between the ages of 21 and 50 for compulsory military labor in the country's defense; the remaining 900,000 Jews were being transferred to German territory. This transfer was said to have gone on daily in sealed freight cars holding 70 persons each, without sanitary arrangements and with only whatever food each person carried. Estimates of the number of persons already sent to Germany in this manner varied between 20,000 and 100,000. The purpose of this transportation, it was stated, appeared to be partly to furnish labor for Germany and partly, in the case of children and the aged, to furnish hostages of a sort or protection against bombing if they were quartered near war industries.1/

Shortly after transmitting the substance of this memorandum, Minister Johnson was advised by a spokesman of the Foreign Office that information later received from Budapest indicated the treatment of Jews was so terrible as to defy description. Of the total number of Jews in Hungary originally, it was estimated that not more than 400,000 remained and these were mostly in Budapest. The others - of whom there were conservatively well over 600,000 - were said to have been either deported to Germany or killed. Evidence reaching the Swedish Foreign Office supported previous reports that large numbers of Jews were being killed en masse by means of a gas chamber across the Hungarian frontier in Poland.2/

The Swedish Legation in Budapest, acting through Attache Wallenberg and his limited staff, had attempted, in particular, to aid persons in Hungary having Swedish connections. Communication between the Swedish Legation and persons in Hungary holding protective papers issued by the Legation, however, became virtually impossible. Letters to such persons were returned as undeliverable. Only in rare instances could personal visits by the Legation's staff be undertaken, and these accomplished little. Letters and notes addressed to military officials or to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry by the Swedes were politely received, but replies were practically never forthcoming.

One example cited was the case of Jews holding Swedish passports. Hungarian authorities, instead of agreeing to leave such persons at liberty until they could proceed to Sweden, as was done in the case of other Swedish subjects, declared that after July 1, 1944, all alien Jews were to be interned. Oral inquiries addressed to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry elicited only vague replies. Vague replies were also received in connection with inquiries concerning the possibility of interning such persons in special camps to be maintained and administered by Sweden.3/

1/ Dispatch No. 3593 from Stockholm dated June 26, 1944, comprising document 175.

2/ Cable No. 2412 from Stockholm dated July 1, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 2510 and 2511 from Stockholm, both dated July 7, 1944.

Information Obtained from Swiss Government. The Swiss government was likewise cooperative in relaying to the Board information it received concerning the situation in Hungary. A Swiss spokesman stated that, while no exact figures were obtainable, reports to the Swiss Foreign Office indicated that as of July 1944 some 250,000 deportations from Hungary had already occurred. It was further indicated, in strictest confidence, that the Swiss Government was facilitating communication between interested groups in Switzerland and Jewish organizations in Hungary. Moreover, the Swiss Minister in Budapest was under instructions to leave the Hungarian Government in no doubt as to the attitude of the Swiss Government and the Swiss people with regard to these persecutions. A similar message had been conveyed to the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires in Bern.<sup>1/</sup>

United States Note Delivered to Hungarian Authorities. On June 16, 1944, in an effort to confront Hungarian authorities with their responsibility for the infamous treatment visited upon the Jews, Minister Harrison at the Board's request delivered to the Swiss Foreign Office for transmission to the Hungarian Government a note inquiring into the intentions of Hungary with respect to the future treatment of Jews and reiterating the grave view which this Government took regarding the persecution of Jews and other minorities.<sup>2/</sup> The Swiss communicated this note verbatim to Hungarian officials on June 27, 1944.<sup>3/</sup> It was not until August 1944 that a reply was received.<sup>4/</sup>

Military Measures Held Impracticable. Although the Board at the outset, in response to a British query, had declared that military measures were not contemplated as an essential part of the Board's rescue and relief program, the tragic turn of events in Hungary gave rise to renewed suggestions that some sort of military operations be undertaken. Because of the immensity of the catastrophe being visited upon the Jews of Hungary, the Board gave serious consideration to all rescue proposals advanced. Thus on June 29, 1944, the Board addressed a memorandum to Assistant Secretary of War McCloy, directing his attention to the recommendations relayed by Board Representative McClelland from Bern concerning the proposal of various agencies that vital sections of the railway lines being used for the deportation of

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 4506 from Bern dated July 14, 1944, comprising document 176.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 3843 from Bern dated June 16, 1944, comprising document 177.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 4260 from Bern dated July 1, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 5040 from Bern dated August 5, 1944, comprising document 173. See page 159.



Jews from Hungary to Poland be bombed for the purpose of forestalling or hindering German extermination operations.1/

The War Department in turn advised the Board that it was of the opinion that the suggested bombing was impracticable, since it could only be executed "by the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations" and would in any case be of doubtful efficacy.2/

Various other proposals along these lines were received by the Board. It was suggested that concentration and extermination centers be bombed in order that the resultant confusion might enable some of the persons held to escape and hide. It was also proposed that weapons be dropped by parachute during such bombings and that parachute troops be used to bring about disorganization and escape. These particular proposals were not referred to the War Department because the Board did not feel justified in asking at that stage of the war that any measures be undertaken involving the diversion or sacrifice of American troops.

One private organization urged that the Board ask the War Department to make transport planes available to a neutral power to be used to facilitate the evacuation of Hungarian Jews. This request was not referred to the War Department, however, because it seemed clear that the Germans would not consider granting safe-conduct to such planes inasmuch as they had refused to grant safe-conduct to ships carrying Jewish refugees from Rumania to Turkey. Moreover, the Board felt in this case also that it would not be proper at that time to ask the War Department to divert military equipment to non-military purposes.

There was also the recurrent proposal that Hungarian rescue operations be undertaken by means of small vessels sailing down the Danube.3/ After careful investigation of this proposal, it was learned that such operations were not feasible because of the heavy mining of the waters of the Danube by Allied air forces.4/ A Swiss request that safe-conduct be granted for such voyages was therefore denied by both the United States and Great Britain.5/

- 1/ Memorandum to Assistant Secretary of War McCloy dated June 29, 1944, comprising document 179.
- 2/ Letter from Assistant Secretary of War McCloy dated July 4, 1944, comprising document 180.
- 3/ See, for example, Cable No. 5820 from Bern dated September 5, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 7394 from London dated September 8, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 3498 to Bern dated October 13, 1944.



Appeal Addressed to Hungary by King of Sweden. Early in July 1944 the Board learned that, as a result of the petitioning of Jewish groups in Sweden, the King of Sweden had addressed a strong personal appeal to the Hungarian Government appealing to it "in Humanity's name" to do what it could to stop the massacre of defenseless persons.<sup>1/</sup>

International Red Cross Appeal to Hungarian Regent. A little later in July the Swiss Foreign Office revealed that it had transmitted a direct appeal from President Huber of the International Red Cross to Hungarian Regent Horthy. This appeal was in line with the promise obtained by the Board with respect to enlargement of the Red Cross delegation in Hungary.<sup>2/</sup> It enumerated known facts concerning the anti-Jewish persecutions and sought permission to send a special mission to Hungary to be present at deportations in order to assist people with medicines and food and to exercise some control over the ultimate fate of the deportees.<sup>3/</sup>

According to an International Red Cross communique published on July 18, 1944, Hungarian authorities, in response to this appeal, gave official assurances that the deportation of Jews had ceased. The Red Cross, according to this statement, had been authorized to furnish relief to Jewish internees in Hungary and to aid in the evacuation of all Jewish children under 10 years of age who were in possession of visas to receptive countries; moreover, all Jews in Hungary holding Palestine certificates were to be permitted to leave for Palestine.<sup>4/</sup>

Substantial relief was later provided by the Red Cross in Hungary, in line with this authorization. Several thousand children were housed and fed, along with many mothers who feared separation from their children. A considerable amount of the private funds which the Board had arranged to have sent abroad for relief purposes was spent by the Red Cross in connection with these activities in Hungary.

The Horthy Proposal. Later in July 1944 a letter was received from the Washington Delegate of the International Red Cross confirming the fact that the Hungarian Government had indicated

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 2412 from Stockholm dated July 1, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 3731 from Bern dated June 11, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cables No. 4324 and 4506 from Bern dated July 7 and 14, 1944, the latter comprising document 176.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 4896 from Bern dated July 29, 1944, comprising document 171.

its willingness to make possible the emigration of certain categories of Jews. The proposal failed, however, to elaborate on what categories of Jews would be permitted to leave Hungary. 1/

Despite the vague nature of the Hungarian "offer", it seemed imperative to reply to it as soon as possible and to stress that this Government's acceptance was not limited to any special category of Jews but embraced all who might be permitted to leave. Since the inquiry received through the Red Cross had been addressed to the United Kingdom as well as to the United States, an exchange of views with Great Britain was undertaken through Ambassador Winant in London. 2/

After a series of proposals and counterproposals, the British advised the Board that they were prepared to join in a public statement announcing the Horthy proposal, the terms of its acceptance by the United States, and Britain's readiness to "cooperate" to the extent of British resources in the fulfillment of the commitment made by this Government. This proposal was not acceptable to the Board; accordingly, this Government's reply, which had been held up for several days pending receipt of the British response, was delivered to the Red Cross through Minister Harrison in Bern on August 11, 1944, without British support. Public statement concerning this Government's action, however, was withheld pending further discussion with the British.

The reply transmitted by Minister Harrison reiterated the assurances given by this Government that it would arrange for the care of all Jews permitted to leave Hungary for neutral or United Nations' territory and would find temporary havens for such people. 3/ These assurances were likewise communicated to the governments of the neutral European countries, which were requested to permit the entry of Jews reaching their borders from Hungary. 4/

Joint Declaration Issued by the United States and Great Britain. On August 16, 1944, the Board was advised that the British had finally agreed to join the United States in accepting the Horthy offer. 5/ On August 17 the following joint statement was issued by the two Government: 6/

- 1/ Letter from the Washington Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross dated July 25, 1944, comprising document 181.
- 2/ Cable No. 5948 to London dated July 28, 1944, comprising document 182.
- 3/ Cables No. 2657 and 2715 to Bern dated August 2 and 7, 1944, comprising documents 183 and 184.
- 4/ Cable No. 1501 to Stockholm dated July 28, 1944, comprising document 185; repeated on the same date to Lisbon, Madrid, and Ankara; repeated to Bern on August 1, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 6609 from London dated August 16, 1944, comprising document 186.
- 6/ Department of State Press Release No. 366 dated August 17, 1944.

"The International Committee of the Red Cross has communicated to the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States an offer of the Hungarian Government regarding the emigration and treatment of Jews. Because of the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary and the overwhelmingly humanitarian considerations involved the two governments are informing the Government of Hungary through Intercross that, despite the heavy difficulties and responsibilities involved, they have accepted the offer of the Hungarian Government for the release of Jews and will make arrangements for the care of such Jews leaving Hungary who reach neutral or United Nations territory, and also that they will find temporary havens or refuge where such people may live in safety. Notification of these assurances is being given to the governments of neutral countries who are being requested to permit the entry of Jews who reach their frontiers from Hungary. The Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States emphasize that, in accepting the offer which has been made, they do not in any way condone the action of the Hungarian Government in forcing the emigration of Jews as an alternative to persecution and death."

Visa Programs Developed to Effectuate Declaration. Broad measures were developed to effectuate this joint declaration. Even before the Hungarian negotiations, the Board had undertaken to work out with the State Department a visa program in favor of victims of enemy persecution so related to United States citizens and to alien residents of the United States as to be entitled to nonquota or preference visas, as well as persons to whom United States visas had previously been issued or authorized. In August 1944 the Board's efforts in this direction attained final State Department approval.<sup>1/</sup>

Havens Promised for Child Refugees. As another step to meet the demands of the Hungarian situation, United States consular officers in Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal, on August 21, 1944, were authorized to issue visas to refugee children arriving in those countries from Hungary. Previous instructions concerning the 5,000 United States visas made available in March 1944 for refugee children from France were appropriately amended. <sup>2/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: United States Visas.  
<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2877 to Bern dated August 21, 1944, comprising document 187 ; see also Cable No. 2324 to Madrid of the same date.

Earlier arrangements made by the Board for havens in Ireland and in Latin American countries for refugee children from France were, with the approval of such countries, extended to cover Jewish children from Hungary.<sup>1/</sup> The governments agreeing to the extension of this principle were Eire,<sup>2/</sup> the Dominican Republic,<sup>3/</sup> Honduras,<sup>4/</sup> Nicaragua,<sup>5/</sup> and Paraguay <sup>6/</sup>. Ecuador agreed to accept 300 European children,<sup>7/</sup> and Brazil indicated its willingness to receive 500 Jewish refugee children from Hungary.<sup>8/</sup>

In addition to these commitments, both Sweden and Switzerland made offers of asylum for Jewish children from Hungary. The Swiss offer included sanctuary for 5,000 expectant mothers and children.<sup>9/</sup> While it was not anticipated that the number of children actually evacuated in this manner would be large, appropriate officials were advised that this Government, either singly or in cooperation with the British, would guarantee the costs of maintaining those evacuated and would also seek to accomplish their ultimate removal from Sweden and Switzerland at an early date.<sup>10/</sup>

Spanish Efforts Reported. Meanwhile, arrangements were made for the granting of Spanish visas for Tangier in Morocco to 500

- <sup>1/</sup> Circular airgram to Canberra, Ottawa, Dublin, and various Latin American republics dated August 12, 1944, comprising document 188; see also Cable No. 680 to Quito dated August 10, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 131 from Dublin dated August 15, 1944, comprising document 189.
- <sup>3/</sup> Dispatch No. 294 from Ciudad Trujillo dated September 5, 1944, comprising document 190.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 257 from Tegucigalpa dated August 15, 1944, comprising document 191.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 538 from Managua dated August 28, 1944, comprising document 192.
- <sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 503 from Asuncion dated September 5, 1944, comprising document 193.
- <sup>7/</sup> Cable No. 908 from Quito dated September 15, 1944, comprising document 194.
- <sup>8/</sup> Cable No. 7393 from London dated September 8, 1944, comprising document 195.
- <sup>9/</sup> Cable No. 4506 from Bern dated July 14, 1944, comprising document 176.
- <sup>10/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.



Jewish children in Hungary and 70 accompanying adults.<sup>1/</sup> Although it proved impossible to arrange transportation to Tangier, these visas enabled their bearers to remain assembled in Budapest in special buildings under Spanish protection and International Red Cross supervision.

In response to representations made by Ambassador Hayes, Spanish diplomatic and consular personnel in areas under German occupation or control, including Hungary, also were instructed to render any other assistance possible to Jews and other persons in imminent danger of persecution or death, regardless of nationality. These efforts were responsible for the saving of many lives.

Portuguese Visas Issued to Axis Victims. Portuguese authorities likewise cooperated by agreeing in principle to permit the entry of Jewish refugees reaching their borders from Hungary and by so informing the Hungarian Government. A number of Portuguese visas were, in fact, issued to endangered persons still in Hungary, on the basis of which Hungarian exit visas were obtained, but the Germans refused to permit the holders of these documents to leave. Some of the persons so affected were accorded asylum in the Portuguese Legation in Hungary.<sup>2/</sup>

In September 1944 the Venezuelan Government authorized its Legation in Lisbon to visa the passports of Jewish refugees, especially children, traveling to the American continent, even though such persons might not be proceeding to Venezuelan territory.<sup>3/</sup> Although the Board had hoped that this action might influence the Portuguese Government to grant large numbers of transit visas to Jews in Hungary and other German-controlled territory, <sup>4/</sup> it developed that the Venezuelan authorization had stipulated that each case had to be confirmed by the Foreign Office in Caracas. In view of the delay inherent in this requirement, Portuguese action along the desired lines appeared unlikely and no such request for transit visas was advanced.<sup>5/</sup>

Hungarian Reply to United States Inquiry. The attitude of the Hungarian authorities during the period after their July offer showed various internal contradictions. The Hungarian Government had, as indicated, granted exit visas to the holders of visas for

- <sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 2791 from Madrid dated July 25, 1944, and Cable No. 3044 from Madrid dated September 5, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cables No. 2560 and 2594 from Lisbon dated August 19 and August 22, 1944.
- <sup>3/</sup> Airgram No. A-708 from Caracas dated August 22, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 2408 to Lisbon dated September 3, 1944.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 3062 from Lisbon dated October 4, 1944.

certain neutral destinations. There were other reports from neutral, Vatican, and International Red Cross sources that the deportations had been temporarily halted and that the Red Cross was being afforded an opportunity to supervise the treatment accorded remaining Jews.

On the other hand, the Hungarian Government attempted to justify its persecution of the Jews, as illustrated by the Hungarian reply to the inquiry of this Government, concerning Hungarian intentions with respect to the future treatment of Jews, which the Swiss had transmitted to Hungary in June 1944. The reply, received in August 1944,<sup>1/</sup> stated that military events on the eastern front and the approach of the Soviet armies made it necessary to mobilize fully all military, material, and moral forces of the country for defense purposes. This meant eliminating "everything that would undermine or diminish the country's resisting power. As defeatist propaganda and agitation of Jews — as in 1918 — became more and more perceptible in this decisive phase of the war and in order to prevent repetition of tragic events of 1918-1919 the Hungarian government was obliged to eliminate on increased scale influence of Jews. They were consequently separated from rest of population and put to more useful work — either in country itself or abroad." The message added that if individual cases of injustice occurred, they were due to subordinate rather than top authorities.

The reply then listed certain concessions which had been granted to Jews in preceding weeks at the instance of "foreign organizations (International Red Cross and War Refugee Board.)" These concessions included temporary suspension of the deportation of Jews including those of non-Hungarian citizenship 2/ for work abroad; authorization for the emigration of Jews to Sweden, Switzerland, Palestine, and other countries; and authority for the International Red Cross to arrange for the emigration of Jewish children under 10 years of age to Palestine.

The Hungarian reply concluded by stating that the "departures" of Jews for work abroad would take place under humanitarian conditions, with the Hungarian Red Cross being permitted to exercise control. Permission would also be given for the sending of food parcels to persons in concentration camps through the Red Cross.<sup>1/</sup>

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 5040 from Bern dated August 5, 1944 comprising document 178.  
<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 5068 from Bern dated August 7, 1944.

Exception Taken to Hungarian Response. The limited assurances contained in the Hungarian note served only to prompt the Board to ask that Minister Harrison inform Hungarian authorities, through the Swiss, that although this Government had taken note of the Hungarian communication, it did not accept the reasoning involved and reserved the right to return at a later date "to the purported facts" related therein. 1/ Thus, in a message conveyed to the Hungarian Government by the Swiss Minister at Budapest on September 6, 1944, this Government's warning with respect to Jewish persecutions was reiterated. Permission to emigrate freely and for International Red Cross supervision of treatment and living conditions was urged as a minimum concession for all categories of Jews. 2/

Note Addressed to International Red Cross. Taking advantage of the opening afforded by the Hungarian Government's statement to the effect that future deportees for labor service in Germany would be accorded the right of supervision by Hungarian Red Cross representatives, Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland in August 1944, at the Board's request 3/, urged the International Red Cross to get in touch with Hungarian authorities and the Hungarian Red Cross at once in the hope that supervision might be established over all camps to which Jews from Hungary had been deported in the past. The Board felt that the establishment of such supervision was urgent because of the possibility that the 400,000 Jews already said to have been deported might suffer extermination unless such supervision were undertaken at the earliest possible moment. 2/

The Board subsequently learned that the International Red Cross was not anxious to extend supervision to the Hungarian deportations, this attitude being dictated by the fear that such action would be interpreted as participation in or approval of deportations. A proposal had been submitted to Hungarian authorities, however, seeking extension of Red Cross protection to Jews confined in camps and houses in Hungary. 4/

- 1/ Cable No. 2900 to Bern dated August 23, 1944, comprising document 196.
- 2/ Cable No. 6524 from Bern dated September 30, 1944, comprising document 197.
- 3/ Cable No. 2853 to Bern dated August 19, 1944, comprising document 198.
- 4/ Cable No. 5796 from Bern dated September 3, 1944, comprising document 199.

Board Representative McClelland in turn was asked to convey to the Red Cross the Board's conviction that fear of misinterpretation should not be allowed to stand in the way if supervision of deportations could alleviate the sufferings of deportees; moreover, it was felt that the very presence of that organization's observers might have a salutary effect beyond the mere humanization of treatment of deportees. 1/

The International Red Cross delegation in Hungary was later sufficiently expanded to permit some measure of supervision over many of the concentration and labor camps established in Hungary.

Statement Requested of Hungarians. Referring to the statement in the Hungarian note to the effect that Jews deported from Hungary had been "placed at the disposal of the German Government as workers," this Government early in September 1944 requested through Swiss channels that, in view of the well-known policy of the Germans with respect to Jews, Hungarian authorities furnish a statement of measures being taken by them to insure humane treatment of Jews placed at Germany's disposal. 2/

In a note addressed to the Swiss Legation in response to this request, the Hungarian Foreign Office stated that a Workers' Supervisory Office had been established by the Hungarian Legation at Berlin. The jurisdiction of this office, it was declared, extended "to every male and female worker of Hungarian nationality, regardless of religion or race." The Hungarian note went on to declare that definite cessation of the "transfer of Jews of Jewish faith for labor service abroad" had been ordered in August 1944 and that no Jews had been put at the disposal of the German Government after that time. The readiness of the Hungarian Government to authorize the emigration of all categories of Jews and to permit International Red Cross visits to Hungarian Jews working in Germany was reiterated. 3/

United States Meanwhile Protested Hungarian Complicity. According to reports received by the Board, including stories appearing in the Hungarian press, the Hungarian general population had not sympathized with the brutal anti-Jewish measures employed by the Nazis. Many Hungarians had sided openly with the persecuted Jews and had tried to aid them by furnishing food and clothing.

1/ Cable No. 3255 to Bern dated September 21, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 6524 from Bern dated September 30, 1944, comprising document 197.

3/ Cable No. 6913 from Bern dated October 18, 1944, comprising document 200.



According to one newspaper account, the mass attempt on the part of the general public to get food and clothing to Jews in concentration areas had been an "incomprehensible phenomenon," as a result of which Hungarian authorities had been "forced to take the necessary police measures to cut off such Jews from all contact with the population." 1/

Other reports reaching the Board made increasingly and unmistakably clear the major part which the Hungarian police played in the Hungarian arrests and deportations. 2/ In view of persistent Hungarian denials of the complicity of Hungarian officials in the commission of atrocities, the Board on August 25, 1944, had asked Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland to request the Swiss Government to bring certain reports of Hungarian participation in atrocities to the attention of the appropriate Hungarian authorities. 3/

Minister Harrison discussed this matter with a ranking Swiss official, who took the position that the Swiss could not request their Legation in Budapest to present the matter to the Hungarian authorities without information concerning the time and place of the reported events and the nationality of the Jews involved. 4/

In response to this position the Board promptly cabled all available details appropriate for use by the Swiss in transmitting the proposed message. 5/

Delivery of the protest was finally accomplished on October 11, 1944. 6/

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- 1/ Cable No. 3346 from Bern dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 172 ; see also Cable No. 5397 from Bern dated August 19, 1944.
  - 2/ Cable No. 3242 from Stockholm dated August 22, 1944, comprising document 201.
  - 3/ Cable No. 2933 to Bern dated August 25, 1944, comprising document 202.
  - 4/ Cables No. 5888 and 6445 from Bern dated September 7 and September 28, 1944.
  - 5/ Cable No. 3404 to Bern dated October 3, 1944, comprising document 203.
  - 6/ Cable No. 7048 from Bern dated October 24, 1944, comprising document 204.

Escapes Made into Rumania. During the summer of 1944, particularly in the period following the suspension of deportations, there was a small but steady stream of clandestine Jewish emigration from Hungary into Rumania. While these underground operations were expensive, requiring a substantial amount of the funds, which the Board had arranged to have sent to Switzerland, in order to obtain the collaboration of minor Rumanian and Hungarian officials and to pay transportation and maintenance costs, administrative personnel, and false paper "passeurs," they yielded positive results. 1/ By means of this organized underground movement an estimated 3,500 to 4,000 persons succeeded in reaching Rumanian soil. 2/ Several hundred of these refugees were later enabled to proceed to Palestine via Turkish boats sailing from Constanza. 3/

After the arrival of the first of these refugees in Rumania, the German Minister to Rumania was said to have brought pressure to bear on the Rumanian Government to enact a decree to the effect that anyone escaping across the Rumanian border would immediately be executed by the Rumanians. Despite the later enactment of an official Rumanian edict along these lines, the Rumanian Government made little effort toward enforcement but instead was reported to have requested Jewish organizations in Rumania to arrange for the evacuation of the refugees arriving from Hungary at the earliest possible moment. 4/

According to other reports, the Rumanian Government made Rumanian passports available to Jews in Hungary and took special measures to help them get into Rumania. Board Representative Olsen in Stockholm was further advised by the Rumanian Minister to Sweden that the decree ordering Hungarian Jews to be shot at the Rumanian border had been issued for the purpose of preventing mass flights, which it was felt would greatly endanger their lives. Rumanian border guards, it was asserted, had been privately instructed to shoot no one and not a single person had been shot fleeing across the border. 5/

Slovak Maquis Aided in Hungarian Rescues. Through Board Representative McClelland arrangements were made whereby the Czechoslovak resistance movement aided in rescuing Jews from Hungarian-dominated territories by helping them reach Slovakia, to be en-

- 1/ Cable No. 5343 from Bern dated August 17, 1944.
- 2/ Dispatch No. 808 from Ankara dated October 4, 1944, comprising a summary report from Board Representative Hirschmann to the Board.
- 3/ See Rescue from Rumania and Rescue to and through Turkey.
- 4/ Cable No. 1343 from Ankara dated July 22, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 3153 from Stockholm dated August 18, 1944; see also Cable No. 4257 from Bern dated July 5, 1944, and Cable No. 1546 from Ankara dated August 23, 1944.

rolled in the Slovak Maquis or to be hidden. Following discussions with the Czechoslovak Minister at Geneva, Minister Harrison endorsed certain operations for which funds had been requested, and Board Representative McClelland made a contribution of \$10,000 from special Board funds to the account in Switzerland of the Czech resistance movement. 1/

Escapes Made to Yugoslav Territory. Private funds which the Board had arranged to have sent to Bari, Italy, and Partisan support earlier obtained by Board Representative Ackermann eventually enabled several thousand persons to reach safety during the summer of 1944 by fleeing across the Yugoslav-Hungarian border to Partisan territory. During July and August alone some 7,000 Jews were evacuated from southern Hungary over this route. Men in the group capable of bearing arms were enrolled in the Partisan forces, while women, children, and men physically unfit for military service were removed to the interior. Because the latter were living in extremely primitive conditions, Board Representative McClelland aided in shipping medical and sanitary supplies from Switzerland for the relief of these refugees. 2/

Hungarian Promises Proved Meaningless. Despite the Hungarian "offer" and the broad steps taken by the Board to give meaning to the response of this Government and the British, practically no Jews were evacuated from Hungary except as the result of such relatively small-scale clandestine operations as those aided by the Rumanian, Slovak, and Yugoslav underground movements. There were indications that, for a while, the Jews who had not been deported found themselves in a somewhat better position, a development that was undoubtedly due to the combined pressure of this Government and its Allies, of neutral governments, and of the Vatican, as well as to the necessity of utilizing all available manpower for the defense of Hungary against Allied advances. One such indication came from the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest through the Vatican, the improved situation being attributed to the removal from power of officials responsible for previous atrocities. 3/

There followed, however, an evident tendency on the part of the Hungarian Government to stand solely on its statement of good intentions while passively submitting to German pressure for further deportations of Jews, including Hungarian nationals. Information furnished by the International Red Cross confirmed the fact

1/ Cable No. 4666 from Bern dated July 21, 1944; see also Rescue to and through Switzerland.

2/ Cable No. 6619 from Bern dated October 5, 1944, comprising document 205; see also Rescue to and through Switzerland.

3/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate to the Board dated September 25, 1944, comprising document 206.



that Hungarian officials were not always able to "resist" arbitrary action on the part of the Germans. Red Cross delegations were by that time at work in Hungary and were thus able to exercise some moral influence wherever the opportunity occurred. 1/

As for emigration, German authorities, under various pretexts, refused to grant the Jews in Hungary permission to leave the country or to travel through German territory to adjoining neutral countries. 2/ On September 12, 1944, the International Red Cross reported that, as the result of this attitude, emigration from Hungary toward Rumania and Bulgaria was absolutely impossible. From Ankara Board Representative Hirschmann confirmed this report, adding that all rail communications and civilian movements between Hungary and the Balkan countries had ended. The possibility of evacuations had been further narrowed as a result of the advance of Soviet armies into Transylvania and the Rumanian and Bulgarian declarations of war on Germany. 3/

Emigration toward the neutral countries that were accessible likewise met with serious obstacles, despite the Hungarian assurances. Of the 7,000 to 8,000 persons in Hungary for whom Palestine certificates had been issued, a group of 2,000 such holders (all who could immediately be found) were assembled for emigration shortly after the Horthy "offer". To enable their early departure, a collective passport was issued by the Swiss Legation at Budapest. Despite these preparations, the Germans denied the group exit permits and transit visas. Substantial groups of Hungarian Jews holding Latin American passports who had been granted Swedish and Spanish entry visas were likewise denied permission to leave. 4/ At first, the Germans were said to have declared that their friendship with the Arabs made it impossible for them to permit Jews to emigrate unless assurances were obtained that they would not go to Palestine. Later, assurances were reportedly demanded that all Jews permitted to emigrate would go to Britain or America. 5/

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1/ Cable No. 6713 from Bern dated October 9, 1944.

2/ See, for example, Cable No. 1546 from Ankara dated August 23, 1944, comprising document 207.

3/ Cable No. 1767 from Ankara dated September 19, 1944.

4/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

5/ Cable No. 6276 from Bern dated September 22, 1944, comprising document 208.



In line with these reports, the International Red Cross recommended that this Government, in concert with the British, indicate to the Hungarians its willingness to transport a certain number of Hungarian Jews to some haven other than Palestine.<sup>1/</sup>

In response to this recommendation, Board Representative McClelland was requested to point out to the Red Cross that nothing in the Board's acceptance of the Horthy proposal implied limitation of the Board's interests to Jews possessing Palestine certificates or planning to go to Palestine. It was further suggested that he reiterate this Government's refusal ever to limit its undertakings with respect to the emigration of Jews from Hungary to any specific number or particular category of Jews or to Jews going to any particular country, and that he protest against the attempt of German and Hungarian authorities to introduce such arbitrary limitations.<sup>2/</sup>

Further Compulsory Relocation Planned. The seriousness of the Hungarian situation was accentuated in a report from Board Representative McClelland under date of September 15, 1944, to the effect that every able-bodied man and woman among the estimated 200,000 Jews remaining in Hungary was to be placed in compulsory agricultural and industrial work in various parts of the country "in the interest of national defense." Budapest Jews physically unsuited for work apparently were to be placed in two large camps; those too aged or infirm for these camps were to be sent to "Jewish hospitals" in unspecified locations. Board Representative McClelland's informant declared that these camps were to be under military control whereas press reports from Budapest referred to "Red Cross" supervision, without specifying whether such supervision would be by the International or the Hungarian Red Cross. In an attempt to clarify the matter, Board Representative McClelland learned that the International Red Cross had received no details concerning such an arrangement; moreover, continued failure of the Germans to issue transit visas for International Red Cross personnel from Switzerland left the International Red Cross in no position to exercise any effective degree of control over the camps.<sup>3/</sup>

Apparent confirmation of these proposed Hungarian actions was contained in word received by the Swiss from their Legation

1/ Cable No. 5579 from Bern dated August 26, 1944, comprising document 209.

2/ Cable No. 3120 to Bern dated September 9, 1944, comprising document 210.

3/ Cable No. 6093 from Bern dated September 15, 1944, comprising document 211.

in Budapest. It was hinted that Hungarian approval of these measures was for the purpose of protecting the Jews, against whom the Germans might otherwise have taken sudden mass extermination measures without consulting Hungarian authorities. 1/

Formal Protest Made. In view of these reports, Board Representative McClelland was asked to convey to the German authorities through Swiss channels this Government's emphatic protest against the impending deportations. The Board also proposed that the strongest possible unofficial representations be made to appropriate individual German authorities through Swiss and Swedish channels. 2/

Board Representative McClelland, however, recommended that a formal protest along these lines be addressed by this Government to the Hungarians. 3/ Shortly thereafter the Board forwarded a prepared statement to the effect that, in view of the fate of Jews previously removed from other cities to camps similar to those proposed and in view of the approach of winter, this Government had good reason to regard the impending deportations as a further measure of mass extermination. Mass extermination, the message pointed out, could be accomplished either by the methods employed at camps of final destination in Poland or by subjecting large numbers of people to undernourishment, hard physical labor, and unhygienic living conditions in improvised camps. For these reasons, the statement continued, this Government considered it appropriate to remind Hungarian authorities of its determination, as expressed by President Roosevelt in his statement in March 1944 and publicly reaffirmed shortly thereafter by committees of both Houses of Congress, that none participating in these acts of savagery should go unpunished and that all who shared the guilt should share the punishment. The message concluded by stating that allowance was made for the possibility that the plan was inspired by genuinely humanitarian motives, and to the extent that this proved to be the case, the United States would recognize such claims.

Representative McClelland was requested also to employ such unofficial channels as might be available to him for transmission of this message; Board Representative Dexter in Lisbon and Ackermann in Caserta were similarly instructed. 4/

1/ Cable No. 6092 from Bern dated September 15, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 3245 to Bern dated September 20, 1944, and Cable No. 1883 to Stockholm of the same date.

3/ Cable No. 6447 from Bern dated September 28, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 3435 to Bern dated October 6, 1944, comprising document 212; repeated on the same date to Lisbon and Caserta.

Minister Harrison reported that this message reached the Hungarian Foreign Office through Swiss channels on October 28, 1944. 1/ The substance of the message was also transmitted to Budapest through the Hungarian Legation in Lisbon. Meanwhile, in Italy, Board Representative Ackermann sought Vatican intercession in bringing the matter to the attention of Hungarian authorities. 2/ Through the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, the Board asked that the Holy See also broadcast a public appeal against the impending deportations. 3/

Hungarian Response to This Government's Protest. In a statement delivered by the Hungarians to the Swiss Legation in Budapest on November 8, 1944, in response to this message, the Hungarians took the position that Jewish workers were needed in Hungary's total war mobilization and that the concentration of Jews fit for work was not discriminatory, since it was based on a law of 1939 according to which all physically fit persons, without distinction as to race, nationality, or religion, were subject to military labor service under military discipline. Jewish concentration and work camps, it was alleged, were not punishment camps. The Hungarian statement went on to reiterate that the Hungarian and German Governments had consented to the visit of an International Red Cross delegate to camps where Hungarian Jews were performing labor in Germany, and that the protection of these Jews was appropriately provided for "according to the nature of the work performed." It was claimed that Hungarian actions with respect to Jews were undertaken in the light of the interests of Hungary and that "foreign threats of whatever kind" could not change this principle.

The reply went on to declare that the Hungarian Government intended to treat Jews in a just and humane manner but warned that such treatment would be dependent upon the attitude of the Jews themselves and upon the absence of "further enemy terroristic attacks on the Hungarian civilian population." With respect to passports and other documentation issued by foreign missions in Budapest to Hungarian Jews for their emigration to neutral countries or to Palestine, the reply reiterated that the Hungarian Government was prepared to recognize these papers and to allow the emigration of the Jews concerned "within the framework of the number of visas agreed upon by the German Government for transit through German territory in case normal diplomatic relations with the interested country so permit." 4/

1/ Cable No. 7304 from Bern dated November 3, 1944; see also Cable No. 6793 from Bern dated October 12, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 723 from Caserta dated October 12, 1944.

3/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecution: Appeals through the Vatican.

4/ Cable No. 7973 from Bern dated December 7, 1944, comprising document 213.



Despite this exchange of notes and despite continued psychological pressure exerted through Office of War Information broadcasts to Hungary, 1/ there was no indication that there had been any change of plans in connection with the impending deportations of Jews for compulsory labor.

Protective Documents Respected. Repeated efforts on the part of the Board, along with the support of Switzerland as the protecting power of the United States, eventually resulted in the exemption from deportation for labor service and from other restrictive measures of large numbers of bearers of certificates issued by Switzerland, including holders of Palestine certificates and Latin American passports. 2/ A new Hungarian regime had assumed office and had promised still other measures to alleviate the position of Jews.

The firm position of the Swedish Government with respect to the treatment of Jews in Hungary holding Swedish protective passports, along with intervention by the King of Sweden, likewise brought assurances that Swedish passports would be respected. 3/

In line with these assurances, official radio broadcasts from Budapest on October 29 and 30, 1944, reversing decisions reflected in earlier October broadcasts, instructed all Hungarian authorities, the army, and the police that protective documents or foreign passports were to be respected. In the future Jewish holders of such documents were not to be sent to compulsory labor service; moreover, foreign consulates and legations and the premises of the International Red Cross were to enjoy the rights of extraterritoriality. 4/

The Papal Nuncio in Hungary was reportedly given similar assurances by the new Hungarian regime, 5/ though German exit and transit visas for persons holding protective foreign passports were still lacking.

Following representations made by the Board through Ambassador Hayes in Madrid, the Spanish Legation in Budapest eventually issued approximately 2,300 letters of protection to endangered Jews, 6/ along with some 700 visas for Morocco, 7/ thereby giving

1/ See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

2/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

3/ Cable No. 4457 from Stockholm dated November 1, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 7269 from Bern dated November 1, 1944, comprising document 214.

5/ Cable No. 4426 from Stockholm dated October 31, 1944.

6/ Cables No. 3896 and 4028 from Madrid dated November 29 and December 14, 1944.

7/ Dispatch No. 3504 from Madrid dated December 4, 1944.



them the same form of protection which was operating successfully for the group of 500 children previously assembled at Budapest and making it possible for them to escape internment or deportation.

Throughout the German control of Hungary, however, the actual departure of any group of holders of foreign documents proved impossible. Many false starts were made and the Board's efforts to facilitate obtaining the necessary transit visas were unremitting. In one instance, the Swiss Minister to Hungary reported that German transit visas and all other necessary papers for a group of approximately 7,000 persons had finally been obtained, but lack of rolling stock prevented their evacuation. 1/

Through the intervention of the Swedish Legation, there had been accomplished the gradual release from compulsory labor service of approximately 15,000 Jews. In the case of about 4,500 Jews with special Swedish passports, 2/ it proved possible to accomplish their assignment to special quarters under Swedish protection, where relief and medical attention were provided.

Availability of United States Visas Recalled. Despite the obvious unwillingness of German authorities to permit emigration from Hungary, the Board persevered in its efforts in this direction. On September 30, 1944, upon learning that the Germans had given vague indication that they might reconsider their refusal to permit the emigration of the group of 2,000 Jews holding Palestine certificates, Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were asked to recall to the attention of German and Hungarian authorities, through the Swiss Government and the International Red Cross, the United States visa program developed some time before in favor of children, close relatives of United States citizens and of alien residents in the United States, and of persons to whom visas had previously been issued or authorized. 3/ Nothing was accomplished by this action, however.

Renewed Excesses Indicated. In October 1944, according to radio broadcasts from Budapest intercepted in Istanbul and relayed by the Board's representative in Ankara, Jews were forbidden to leave their homes under any circumstances until further notice, and visits to Jewish homes by non-Jews were prohibited. From these and other statements broadcast by Hungarian officials, 4/ as well as from reports received from Bern, 5/ it was apparent that renewed excesses were imminent.

- 1/ Cable No. 7716 from Bern dated November 24, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 4720 from Stockholm dated November 18, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 3378 to Bern dated September 30, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 1998 from Ankara dated October 19, 1944.
- 5/ Cables No. 7045 and 7093 from Bern dated October 24 and 25, 1944.

The gravity of the situation was further apparent in word received from the International Red Cross delegate in Budapest later in October. According to this report, a total of 50,000 men were being deported to Germany, ostensibly as labor; all aged and all sick persons, including children, were being concentrated in a ghetto in Budapest; and all remaining able-bodied men and women were being employed in the construction of fortifications in the vicinity of Budapest. An energetic protest against these actions was lodged by the International Red Cross delegate with the Hungarian authorities. 1/

A report from Swedish Attache Wallenberg in Budapest likewise described extremely unfavorable developments, such as the issuance of an order for all Jews to be used as labor on defense works and the cancellation of all special privileges for any groups previously exempted from anti-Jewish regulations. Several thousand new murders were reported. The Swedish attache's Jewish staff employed in relief activities disappeared completely on October 17, 1944; he finally succeeded in locating all but 10 of them. Under a plan subsequently worked out with the Hungarian Foreign Minister, the staff members recovered were moved to specially protected homes. 2/ The Swedish Government continued to make strong representations to Hungarian authorities with respect to the treatment of Jews, and at one point serious consideration was given to withdrawal of the entire Swedish Mission.

Forced Marches to Germany Begun. Through the Swedish Foreign Office the Board next learned that early in November 1944, following the alleged finding of arms and munitions in certain Jewish homes, the Hungarian Arrow Cross party took over the Government, and Hungarian Jews became the object of increased terrorism. Several hundred murders occurred and wholesale arrests were made. Even Jews under Swedish protection were arrested. 3/ Other reports including word received from delegates of the International Red Cross in Hungary, confirmed the fact that deportations for labor in Germany were proceeding actively, the deportees being forced to travel on foot because of lack of rolling stock. 4/

According to one report from private sources, 25,000 persons, roughly 70 percent women and 30 percent men, were brutally assembled in a tile factory on the outskirts of the city by Arrow Cross party members between November 8 and 19, 1944, and were forced to set out on foot from Budapest. Children as young as 10 were included, and adults ranging up to 80 years of age. They

1/ Cable No. 7088 from Bern dated October 25, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 4416 from Stockholm dated October 30, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 4598 from Stockholm dated November 10, 1944.

4/ See, for example, Cable No. 4057 from Lisbon dated November 24, 1944, and Cables No. 2271 and 2337 from Ankara dated November 29 and December 9, 1944.

were sent out in groups of from 2,000 to 2,500 per day along the main highway from Budapest and were expected to cover 20 to 30 kilometers daily. The food they were given and the supplies they were allowed to carry with them were totally inadequate, so that 15 to 20 percent of the deportees died or fell out from complete exhaustion along the way. Of those who reached a destination 109 kilometers from Budapest, 80 percent could scarcely be considered capable of physical labor.

In addition to deportations conducted by the Arrow Cross another 13,000 Jews, the majority men, were said to have been sent to Austria on foot by an S.S. group in Budapest. 1/

Information received from the Swedish Legation in Budapest indicated that about 40,000 persons were involved in the forced marches to Germany. Cold and rainy weather prevailed during these marches, and since the deportees had to sleep under rain covers and in the open, many of them died. Mr. Wallenberg himself saw seven persons who had died one day and seven who had died the day before. The Secretary of the Portuguese Legation reported having seen 42 dead persons along the line of march; others related similar experiences. When any of the marchers could no longer manage to walk, they were shot. At the border, the deportees were taken over by an S.S. officer and those who survived the march and the beatings were put at hard labor on border fortifications.

For a short time, until it was forbidden, deportees in the columns marching to the border were given certain foods and medicines. Intervention in one form or another resulted in the return of several thousand persons from places where Jews were loaded for deportation, but forcible measures threatened by the Germans interrupted this practice.

In contrast to the treatment accorded Jewish deportees, comparatively good conditions prevailed in the houses in which Jews were held as wards of Sweden. Those held were vaccinated against typhus, paratyphus, and cholera, as were the staff members of the Legation engaged in helping Axis victims. Following the events of October 1944, Swedish activities in Hungary were further expanded; by December, employees totaled 335, in addition to about 40 physicians, house governors, and the like. 2/

1/ Cable No. 7971 from Bern dated December 6, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 5235 from Stockholm dated December 22, 1944, comprising document 215.



Red Cross Letters Provided Protection. As another consequence of the ominous events of October, the International Red Cross was persuaded to give out hundreds of special letters of protection to persons in Hungary whose safety was threatened. 1/

Protection Afforded Palestine Certificate Holders. Through the efforts of the British as well as of the Board's representatives abroad, lists of persons in Hungary for whom Palestine immigration certificates had been authorized (about 20,000 families were involved) were transmitted to the Swiss Legation in Budapest, which, as the protecting power, sought to protect these persons and accomplish the necessary measures to enable their emigration to Palestine. After the Swiss Legation had undertaken numerous representations in favor of these persons, the Hungarian and German Governments in November 1944 finally declared themselves ready to authorize the emigration of about 7,800 Jews holding Palestine certificates, but arbitrarily denied the right of Switzerland to accord protection to the other Jews authorized to enter Palestine.

These 7,800 persons, freed from labor service, were immediately assembled by the Swiss in about 25 buildings, which were placed under the protection of the Swiss Legation.

As had been the case in connection with persons whom the Swedish Legation was housing and otherwise seeking to protect, there were forced entrances to these houses by members of the Arrow Cross party; on various occasions identity documents issued by the Legation and even the individuals themselves were taken away. 2/

The actual emigration of these Palestine certificate holders under Swiss protection was apparently never accomplished while hostilities continued, despite unremitting efforts on the part of the War Refugee Board and interested governments and organizations. Two large groups of persons for whom Palestine certificates were said to have been promised, composed largely of Hungarians who had been held in camps in Germany proper, however, were evacuated to Switzerland toward the end of 1944 and in early 1945, 3/ and plans were later made for the onward movement to Palestine, via Italy, of some 700 of these persons. 4/

1/ Letter from Board Representative McClelland to Executive Director Pehle dated November 11, 1944, and enclosures.

2/ Dispatch No. 10437 from Bern dated January 3, 1945.

3/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

4/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: Palestine.



Fall of Hungary to Soviet Armies. Soviet armies reaching Hungary in November and December 1944 promptly took over the administration of this German satellite, thereby effectively ending one of the most brutal of all periods of organized persecution of minority groups on racial and religious grounds.

## II H. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE FROM BULGARIA

In 1939 there were an estimated 82,000 Jews in Bulgaria. By early 1944, when the Board came into being, only about 40,000 remained. A state approaching general panic was reported among the Bulgarian Jewish population at that time because of the widespread uncertainty over the ultimate aim of the government's anti-Jewish policy and because means of livelihood had been restricted and community resources were being exhausted. 1/

The desire of Jews to emigrate from Bulgaria was widespread. Contradictory reports were received with respect to whether or not the mass emigration of Jews would be permitted by Bulgarian authorities. Certain reports indicated that the Bulgarian Government was granting exit permission to Jews who had the necessary foreign visas. The fact remained that few persons had been able to reach neutral Turkish territory from Bulgaria. 2/

Board Representative Hirschmann's investigation suggested that if transportation could be provided and if the complex administrative routine involved in sending Palestine certificates and Turkish visas to Bulgaria could be relaxed, there was hope that the Bulgarians might be persuaded to release several hundred persons weekly. If, on the other hand, Palestine certificates and Turkish visas continued to arrive in Bulgaria at the feeble rate at which they had been received in the past, practically all of the Jews there were condemned.

Even after visas were sent through, bribes to petty Turkish officials were frequently necessary. An active trade

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- 1/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through Neutral Countries for accounts of early efforts of the Board to halt persecution and deportations in Bulgaria.
- 2/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

of bribery was reported flourishing on the part of these so-called brokers in "human stock." According to one report, the sum of 1,000 Turkish pounds was being demanded in Sofia for each Turkish visa.

Memoranda were also forwarded by Board Representative Hirschmann with respect to the general situation within Bulgaria, as reported by refugees reaching Turkey. One of these memoranda recited in detail provisions of the Bulgarian anti-Jewish laws. 1/

Bulgaria the Balkan Bottleneck. Not only were few Bulgarian Jews able to get out to Turkey; Bulgaria constituted a bottleneck through which refugees coming from the Balkans by land had to pass to get to Turkey or beyond. If evacuations were to be accomplished from the Balkans to and through Turkey and if Bulgarian Jews were to be spared the fate of Hungarian Jews, immediate action on the part of the Board was imperative.

The Board's subsequent efforts to facilitate the overland evacuation of Bulgarian and other refugees through Bulgaria to Turkey were crowned with a high degree of success; hundreds were so evacuated.

Substantial amounts of funds remitted by American organizations, particularly through Switzerland and Sweden, 2/ under appropriate Treasury licenses enabled these rescue operations in Bulgaria and the other Balkan countries. All efforts to accomplish organized evacuations by sea from Bulgaria, however, proved in vain.

Most successful of all were the negotiations on a diplomatic level inspired by the Board, which culminated in the revocation of all anti-Jewish measures in Bulgaria and the restoration of rights to an estimated 40,000 persons.

Conference Held with Bulgarian Minister. In an effort to facilitate the emigration of endangered persons and to improve the lot of persecuted minorities in Bulgaria, Board

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1/ Dispatch No. 596 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944; see also Cable No. 380 from Ankara dated March 3, 1944, comprising document 16, and Cable No. 221 to Ankara dated March 20, 1944.

2/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland and Rescue to and through Sweden.

Representative Hirschmann in March 1944 conferred with the Bulgarian Minister to Turkey. In the course of this informal conference arranged through the representative in Turkey of the International Red Cross, Board Representative Hirschmann advised Minister Balabanoff that Bulgaria would be well advised in her own interest to cease collaborating with the Nazi persecution program and to permit refugees to depart from Bulgaria. At Board Representative Hirschmann's suggestion, Minister Balabanoff agreed to send a message to his government recommending that the same treatment be accorded to Jews and to other minorities in Bulgaria as that received by Bulgarian citizens; that the deplorable conditions in which such minorities were living be immediately ameliorated; and that the Bulgarian Government take steps to authorize the granting of visas and to provide transport for all refugees who wished to leave for Palestine or Turkey.1/

The aid of Ambassador Steinhardt and the intervention of other intermediaries were later enlisted in pressing Minister Balabanoff and the Bulgarian Government toward the elimination of anti-Jewish measures and the immediate and complete reinstatement of the Jewish population to its former rights and liberties. The apparent desire of the Bagryanov regime to win the good will of the American people, as well as the dangers inherent in efforts under way to evacuate by sea even limited numbers of Jewish refugees from Bulgaria, lent force to the drive to ameliorate the over-all condition of the Bulgarian Jewish population.

Exchange of Notes with Bulgarian Minister to Sweden. According to information received by the Board in May 1944 from the United States Legation in Stockholm, the Bulgarian Minister there, who replaced a strong pro-Nazi, had expressed sympathy for the Jewish situation. Minister Johnson reported his belief that the Bulgarian Minister might be induced to lend aid to any rescue program being pressed in Bulgaria, and suggested that it would be helpful if details of any program under consideration for Bulgaria could be furnished.2/

In response to this report, the Board forwarded a detailed account of the manner in which Board Representative Hirschmann in Ankara handled similar situations with respect to both the Rumanian and Bulgarian Ministers to Turkey.

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1/ Cable No. 499 from Ankara dated March 20, 1944, comprising document 216.

2/ Cable No. 1628 from Stockholm dated May 8, 1944.



A direct approach by Board Representative Olsen to the Bulgarian Minister in Stockholm was proposed, along the lines of Board Representative Hirschmann's interview with the Bulgarian Minister in Ankara. The Board suggested that in such an interview it could be pointed out that Bulgaria's failure thus far to reply to the telegram and memorandum sent by the Bulgarian Minister in Ankara, as a result of the Hirschmann interview, created an unfavorable impression on this government. It was suggested that the Bulgarian Government again be warned that such action would be taken into account in the final reckoning, for it was indicative that Bulgaria had not yet determined to turn its back on the Nazi ideology of race and minority persecution. 1/

Minister Johnson subsequently reported that an informal memorandum along the lines suggested was presented to the Bulgarian Minister in Stockholm. Minister Johnson was later told that this memorandum was being forwarded to the Bulgarian Foreign Office and that a reply could be expected in due course. 2/ Meanwhile an informal response was received by Minister Johnson from the Bulgarian Minister stating in effect, that both the Bulgarian Government and the Bulgarian people had maintained a sympathetic attitude toward Jews. It was asserted that the Government of Bulgaria had never turned a deaf ear to humanitarian considerations or to those of tolerance. It was alleged that the air force of the United States, however, had been engaged in acts of violence and cruelty against the defenseless civilian population in Bulgaria, including the total destruction of the Queen's chateau, which was said to have been far removed from any objective of a military nature and in an isolated location.

The reply concluded with the observation that if a stop could be put to the alleged slaughter of an innocent civilian population, the Bulgarian Government would undoubtedly be prepared not only to recognize the moral right of this Government to advance humanitarian pleas, but also to approve action consistent with such pleas. 3/

1/ Cable No. 982 to Stockholm dated May 22, 1944.

2/ Enclosure No. 2 to Dispatch No. 3602 from Stockholm dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 217.

3/ Cable No. 2122 from Stockholm dated June 13, 1944; see also Enclosure No. 1 to Dispatch No. 3602 from Stockholm dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 217.

Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen were advised that a reply to the Bulgarian Minister might be made to the effect that while problems arising from aerial bombings were not within the province of the Board, in considering such matters informally and objectively, it was impossible to overlook the bombings of such civilian centers as Warsaw, Rotterdam, Belgrade, Amsterdam, London, and Coventry, all by forces with which Bulgaria continued to be allied. They were also advised to refer to the appeal directed to Hungarians by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, calling for resistance on the part of the general public to such persecutions. The Board suggested that Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen point out to the Bulgarian Minister that this appeal applied as much to Bulgaria and other Axis countries as to Hungary, and that those to whom such warnings were applicable had it within their power to act in such a way, with respect to Jews and other helpless civilian minorities, as to invite more favorable consideration, when punishments were meted out, than their conduct up to that time might warrant. 1/

Meanwhile the reportedly sympathetic attitude of the Bulgarian Minister in Stockholm was relayed to Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara for his confidential information. 2/ The Board later forwarded for Board Representative Hirschmann's information and guidance details of the informal exchange of memoranda between the Bulgarian Minister to Stockholm and Board Representative Olsen. 3/

Exit Visas Reportedly Withheld. Early in June the Board was advised by Ambassador Steinhardt that, in the course of a discussion with a representative of the Jewish Agency concerning the reasons for the decreasing number of Jewish refugees arriving in Istanbul by rail from Bulgaria, he had been informed that the President of the Jewish community in Buschuk had called on the Chief of Police in Scfia to inquire as to why exit visas for refugees were being withheld. The Chief of Police was said to have replied that the issuance of exit visas to Jewish refugees had been discontinued because of a report to the effect that refugees arriving in Istanbul were being closely questioned by representatives of the British and United States intelligence services concerning military and other conditions in Bulgaria. 4/

1/ Cable No. 1311 to Stockholm dated July 1, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 503 to Ankara dated June 2, 1944, comprising document 46.

3/ Cable No. 667 to Ankara dated July 29, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 1039 from Ankara dated June 9, 1944.

Entry into Turkey Facilitated. Refugees from Bulgaria were able to reach the Turkish borders in limited numbers; reports reaching the Board, however, indicated that Turkish border guards were refusing to let certain refugees without visas cross the border into Turkey. It was therefore proposed to Ambassador Steinhardt that advance arrangements be made with Turkish authorities to permit the entry of such refugees.

In response to this request, Ambassador Steinhardt cited previous informal assurances by the Turkish Foreign Office that entry would not be refused to such refugees provided British and Jewish Agency representatives in Istanbul issued them Palestine entry certificates. At that time such certificates were being issued without delay and as a matter of course. Ambassador Steinhardt stated that, as a result, a considerable number of refugees without Turkish visas who had arrived overland at Turkish border points had already passed through Turkey en route to Palestine. 1/ According to one estimate, during the first six months of 1944 more than 400 persons had been able to enter Turkey from Bulgaria.

Revocation of Anti-Jewish Measures Promised. In mid-July of 1944 Board Representative Hirschmann reported from Ankara that developments of a promising nature were under way in connection with the evacuation of refugees from Bulgaria to Istanbul. In a memorandum informally submitted by Hirschmann to Bulgarian Minister Balabanoff, Bulgarian authorities had been asked to authorize and facilitate the movement by rail of not less than 500 individuals weekly through or from Bulgaria to Turkey; to authorize and assist the movement of refugees by ship from Bulgarian ports; and to order the cessation of all persecution and repressive steps. These matters were said to have been discussed by Balabanoff with Bulgarian officials in Sofia. 2/

Efforts were also made to obtain the agreement of the Bulgarian Government to provide transit facilities for refugees seeking to pass through that country, and to obtain the use of two Bulgarian vessels, the "Vita" and the "Pirin," for the purpose of evacuating refugees from Burgas to Istanbul. 3/

1/ Cable No. 1104 from Ankara dated June 19, 1944, comprising document 47; see also Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ Cable No. 1344 from Ankara dated July 22, 1944, comprising document 218.

3/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

In an interview subsequently arranged between Board Representative Hirschmann and Minister Balabanoff by the International Red Cross representative in Ankara, Minister Balabanoff indicated that the Bulgarian Government had accepted the proposals made. Board Representative Hirschmann was authorized to transmit to the Board the following decisions of the Bulgarian Government:

"One. The Jews are gradually having restored to them the status which they held before the war.

"The 'restrictions, oppressions, persecutions and abuses' are being eliminated.

"Two. Facilities have been officially authorized which will permit them to leave Bulgaria with all possible assistance and a minimum of formalities.

"Three. Instructions will be issued to expedite the departure from Bulgaria of vessels containing refugees.

"Four. The departure by rail will be authorized for approximately 400 to 500 refugees weekly provided the Turk authorities grant transit visas en route to Palestine."

Minister Balabanoff indicated that these decisions of the Bulgarian Government were being communicated to the leaders of the Bulgarian Jewish Community. It was stated that while the change of policy was definitive, the steps would be gradual in order not to "fly in the face of the Germans." Minister Balabanoff went on to say that Bulgaria's new regime was essentially liberal in policy and was attempting to find the best and quickest way to get out from under the Nazi yoke. At Board Representative Hirschmann's request, Minister Balabanoff agreed to confirm in writing the Bulgarian agreement on these matters. 1/

Bulgarian Minister's Note Outlines Steps Taken. In a note subsequently sent to the International Red Cross representative Minister Balabanoff stated that there was no doubt

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1/ Cable No. 1730 from Ankara dated July 26, 1944, comprising document 219.



that the new Bulgarian Government regretted exceedingly all the measures previously adopted concerning Jews in Bulgaria and that it did not in the least approve of these measures.

The Balabanoff note continued: 1/

"But for reasons which will be readily understood, (the new regime) could not proceed to annul immediately the law concerning the Jews. However, it is firmly decided to avoid all arbitrary action in the application of this law as well as all restrictive measures not provided for by the law. In the second place, the Bulgarian Government had decided to facilitate the emigration of Jews desiring to leave the country by reducing, for this purpose the administrative formalities to a strict minimum by removing all obstacles.

"The President of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers has invited the Jewish Consistory in Bulgaria to come to see him and he has had a long conversation with its members concerning the situation of the Jews in the country. He has spoken to them of the steps which he intended to take to mitigate their situation and to facilitate the departure of those who might desire to leave the country. At Sofia, I was able to ascertain that the members of the Consistory came away from the conversation very well satisfied and pleased with their visit to the Bulgarian Prime Minister to whom I understand they expressed their thanks and gratitude for his plans for the Jews.

"In general I consider that the policy of the new Bulgarian Government toward the Jews will be based on principles of equity and humanitarianism. Likewise I do not exclude the possibility of reaching gradually and quickly a completely normal state in the situation of the Jews in our country."

Permission To Use Bulgarian Vessels Too Late. Toward the end of July 1944, the Bulgarian Government finally agreed to permit the use of the "Vita" and the "Pirin" for the purpose

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1/ Cable No. 1371 from Ankara dated July 26, 1944, comprising document 26.

of evacuating refugees from Burgas to Istanbul, 1/ but the realization of this scheme was interrupted by political events in the Balkans. The "Vita" was later reported sunk while en route from Baltchik, Bulgaria, to Burgas to embark passengers at the latter port.

Concrete Indications of Bulgarian Intentions. On July 30, 1944, a group of 40 Bulgarian children accompanied by two adults reached Istanbul by rail. All were in possession of Turkish transit visas and left by rail for Palestine. These children were part of a larger group for whom lists had been submitted many months before, but whose emigration had been held up by technicalities. The evacuation of this group was taken as a concrete indication of the intentions of the Bulgarian Government as stated by Balabanoff in the conference with Hirschmann.

Board Representative Hirschmann reported that the Jewish community of Rousse had been designated by the Bulgarian Government as the agency which was to concern itself with the preparation of Jews desiring to emigrate to Palestine. Bulgarian regulations had previously prohibited the existence of any Jewish organization, and as a result, all steps for emigration had been undertaken for individuals by attorneys at large fees. It was felt that the designation of this community might preface a more orderly emigration of Jews from Bulgaria. 2/

Message Transmitted to Bulgarian Officials. In view of the statements made by Minister Balabanoff, along with the concrete indications that had begun to appear with respect to Bulgarian intentions, Board Representative Hirschmann immediately transmitted to Bulgarian officials a message emphasizing the following points: (1) the intention of this government to hold the Bulgarian Government responsible for taking without delay steps toward ameliorating the situation of the Jews in Bulgaria and toward facilitating the departure of persons desiring to emigrate; (2) this Government's expectation that the Bulgarian anti-Jewish laws would be completely and immediately revoked; and (3) the expectation of this Government that the Bulgarian Government would be completely lax in the enforcement of anti-Jewish measures pending their revocation. 3/

- 1/ Cable No. 1381 from Ankara dated July 27, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1400 from Ankara dated August 1, 1944, comprising document 220.
- 3/ Cable No. 1414 from Ankara dated August 2, 1944, comprising document 221.

On August 5, 1944, Board Representative Hirschmann again saw Minister Balabanoff and reiterated this Government's position in these matters. 1/

Soviet Assistance Contemplated. In view of increasing difficulties in arranging for the evacuation of Jews from the Balkans, either by rail or by sea, and in view of the increasingly favorable war outlook, the Board felt that greater emphasis should be placed on convincing the satellites that it was in their interest to halt anti-Jewish activities and thereby make unnecessary continued evacuations under difficult and dangerous wartime conditions. Ambassador Harriman in Moscow was therefore advised of the results of Board Representative Hirschmann's conference with the Bulgarian Minister to Turkey, including Balabanoff's statement that the Bulgarian Government was on excellent terms with the Soviet Government and could be expected to exert any reasonable effort to please the Soviets. 2/ It was suggested that Ambassador Harriman approach appropriate Soviet officials with the suggestion that they might wish to instruct their Charge d'Affaires in Bulgaria to urge the Bulgarians to take action of the nature indicated. 3/

Because of the rapid developments in Bulgaria, however, Ambassador Harriman did not make the suggested approach. 4/

Anti-Jewish Laws Withdrawn. Toward the end of August Board Representative Hirschmann reported from Ankara that, according to a reliable authority, the Bulgarian anti-Jewish laws had been set aside by a decree of the Regent. It was expected that upon the convening of the new Bulgarian Parliament the decree abrogating the anti-Jewish laws would be confirmed. It was also reported that a Commission had been set up in the Ministry of Finance to study ways and means by which confiscated properties might be restored to their original owners. 5/

1/ Cable No. 1446 from Ankara dated August 7, 1944, comprising document 222.

2/ Ibid; see also Cable No. 1450 from Ankara dated August 8, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1955 to Moscow dated August 16, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 3223 from Moscow dated August 30, 1944.

5/ Cables No. 1593, 1600, and 1662 from Ankara dated August 30, August 31, and September 6, 1944, respectively; see also Cable No. 1554 from Ankara dated August 24, 1944.

The question of revocation of anti-Jewish measures was included on the agenda of a special session of the Bulgarian Parliament convened on August 17, 1944. On August 28, the infamous Nuremberg anti-Jewish laws were formally withdrawn. This constituted the first revocation of anti-Jewish legislation by any Axis country or satellite and was a direct result of the Board's efforts.

Statement of Bulgarian Policy Made Public. On September 22, 1944, a statement of policy on the matter of Jewish rights was issued by the Bulgarian Minister of Propaganda to newspaper correspondents and broadcast from Sofia in Bulgarian, English, and Hebrew. This statement declared that the Bulgarian Government had no objection to Jews emigrating to Palestine and would not make it difficult for those wishing to do so. It was asserted that all exclusive laws of an anti-Jewish character had been annulled by the Government. Special reference was made to the law which had established a surtax of 20 to 25 percent of the value of all Jewish property, with a promise for the return of the excess amount which, because of Bulgaria's financial situation, would be accomplished by converting such refunds into state loans of "definite maturity." It was maintained that full equality of rights and freedom with other Bulgarian nationals had thus been restored to the Jews. The statement of policy concluded with an outline of the procedure to be followed in the restoration of confiscated property. 1/

Board's Position on Emigration following Liberation. Word reached the Board to the effect that, despite the apparent discontinuance of anti-Jewish measures in Bulgaria, efforts were being made by allegedly irresponsible individuals representing private organizations to stimulate emigration of Jews from Bulgaria to Palestine, with unauthorized claims being made that such emigration was a part of the Board's program. It was also reported that these individuals had approached Bulgarian officials with a request for the release of Jewish men of military age from service with the Bulgarian armed forces in order that they might proceed to Palestine, this request having been refused by Bulgarian authorities. 2/ The Board immediately cabled Hirschmann that such emigration activities should neither be

1/ Cable No. 1823 from Ankara dated September 26, 1944, comprising document 223.

2/ Cable No. 1858 from Ankara dated September 29, 1944.



encouraged nor discouraged. Board Representative Hirschmann was instructed to make clear to all interested parties the Board's position that unless emigration from Bulgaria was essential for the rescue of victims of enemy oppression still in enemy territory, the matter was clearly outside the Board's jurisdiction. 1/

Bulgarian Jews in Dire Need following Liberation. Late in 1944 reports reached the Board from private sources and from the Board's representative in Ankara 2/ concerning the plight of Jews in Bulgaria and other liberated Balkan countries. Although the anti-Jewish laws had been abolished in Bulgaria and Rumania, 3/ various reports indicated that adequate measures designed to implement the revocation of these laws had not been taken and that several hundred thousand Jews in those countries remained in dire need.

Information received through Ankara indicated that many Bulgarian Jews were returning from outlying districts to repossess their homes in Sofia. While blocked Jewish accounts were being partially released, difficulties were being encountered in the restoration of real property, and a special Bulgarian Government committee had been set up to deal with the problem. Despite a Government declaration that Jewish citizens were entitled to request the return of their homes without special authorization where original ownership could be established, almost all apartments previously occupied by Jews had been taken over by Bulgarians and arrangements to have such apartments vacated immediately proved difficult. Since returning Jews were without resources and had to compete with non-Jewish Bulgarians who were also endeavoring to reestablish their normal economic life, the prospects for restoring Bulgarian Jews to their normal economic life were not encouraging. 4/

According to other reports relayed from Bulgaria, medications of all kinds were urgently needed for the Bulgarian Jewish people. The need for winter clothing also was great,

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1/ Cable No. 851 to Ankara dated October 3, 1944.

2/ Cables No. 1594 and 1773 from Ankara dated August 30 and September 19, 1944.

3/ See Rescue from Rumania.

4/ Cable No. 1799 from Ankara dated September 23, 1944.

but medicines were required without delay. Although medicaments were generally unobtainable in Bulgaria, the lack was particularly acute for the Jews because of the oppressive circumstances under which they had lived during the preceding years. The high incidence of malaria among men released from labor battalions, along with isolated outbreaks of typhus and diphtheria which had already occurred in one group of Jewish people, gave rise to the fear that a grave situation might result from the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions under which the Jewish population was living. 1/

While relief problems in Bulgaria and other liberated areas were considered to be outside the jurisdiction of the Board except to the extent that they might hinder the reception of further refugees, 2/ the Board felt that Board Representative Katzki should visit both Bulgaria and Rumania for the purpose of ascertaining the precise status of minority groups and for the purpose of evaluating further rescue possibilities. Soviet authorities, however, refused permission for this projected mission, or for the entrance of a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. 3/

- 1/ Cable No. 2322 from Ankara dated December 7, 1944.
- 2/ Circular Cable to Ankara, Stockholm, Lisbon, Caserta, London, and Bern dated September 7, 1944, comprising document 224.
- 3/ See Rescue from Rumania.

## II I. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE FROM RUMANIA

A summary of the situation in Rumania in early 1944, based on interviews with newly arrived refugees and on reports and statistics supplied by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, was forwarded by Board Representative Hirschmann following his arrival in Turkey. Prime responsibility for the persecutions there, including recurrent pogroms and wholesale deportations, was attributed to Marshal Antonescu.

The Jewish population of Rumania was estimated to have been about 900,000 persons at the time war began. By early 1944 this number had been considerably reduced by massacres of the Jews in Bessarabia and Bucovina, by the annexation of provinces of Transylvania to Hungary, and by escape of persons to Russia at the beginning of the war with the Soviet Union. The total number of Jews remaining in Rumania in March 1944 was estimated at 266,000.<sup>1/</sup>

One phase of the Board's activities on behalf of these persons and other Axis victims in Rumania involved organizing, arranging, and implementing the programs of private agencies for the relief of the persecuted.<sup>2/</sup> The Board also aided in the evacuation of endangered persons to Turkey,<sup>3/</sup> including negotiating with Rumanian, Bulgarian, and Turkish authorities concerning evacuations by land and with Rumanian and Turkish authorities with respect to evacuations by sea. With even greater success, the Board sponsored negotiations with the various Rumanian régimes in an effort to put a stop to further persecution. In connection with the programs of private

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<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 596 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944; see also Dispatch No. 52 from Bucharest dated January 5, 1945, and Cable No. 733 from Bern dated February 1, 1945.

<sup>2/</sup> See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through Neutral Countries and Appeals through the Vatican for accounts of early efforts of the Board to halt persecution and deportations in Rumania.

<sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Turkey.

agencies to rescue and provide relief for endangered persons in Rumania and other enemy territory, substantial amounts of money were remitted by American organizations, particularly to Switzerland and Sweden, under appropriate Treasury licenses to finance these operations.1/

Evacuations from Transnistria. The deportation of Jews to Transnistria, the area between the Dniestr and the Bug Rivers, had begun in October 1941. It was estimated that some 150,000 persons were deported from the various provinces to Transnistria. Those deported were allowed to take with them only as much of their possessions as they could carry, and they arrived in a territory that had been virtually destroyed. Epidemics broke out and thousands died. Others were employed at difficult tasks with insufficient food and, with few exceptions, were shot mercilessly after the jobs were accomplished.

At the time Board Representative Hirschmann began his initial investigations in Turkey, it was learned that the 50,000 Jews still alive in Transnistria were in danger of being in the zone directly behind the German front.2/ Thus one of the first efforts of the Board was its attempt to work out a program to evacuate these people from Transnistria to Rumania and thereby remove them from the path of the retreating German Army. Representatives in Turkey of American organizations willing to supply funds to finance these evacuations were authorized to get in touch with Board Representative Hirschmann in Ankara for the purpose of formulating a plan of action near the scene of operations.3/

On March 13, 1944, the Board received a report that the Germans had taken over the administration of Transnistria from Rumania. In the light of this report, immediate evacuation of refugees from that area became all the more urgent. Word also reached the Board that the Germans had halted certain evacuations from Transnistria to Rumania that had been initiated earlier in the year. Hirschmann was asked to check on this report and, if verified, to insist that Rumania resist German demands along these lines.4/

Hirschmann replied that, with the approval of Ambassador Steinhardt and through the offices of a Swiss representative of the International Red Cross in Ankara, he had conferred with Alexander Cretzianu, the newly appointed Rumanian Minister to Turkey, on this

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1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland and Rescue to and through Sweden.

2/ Dispatch No. 596 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 146 to Ankara dated February 25, 1944, comprising document 9.

4/ Cable No. 194 to Ankara dated March 13, 1944, comprising document 225.



matter as well as on the general attitude of Rumania toward Jews and other minorities. Report had it that Cretzianu had Marshal Antonescu's confidence but was ideologically opposed to his Government's anti-Semitic policy. Hirschmann advised Cretzianu of the outraged feeling of this Government concerning the brutal treatment being accorded to Jews and other minorities in Rumania, and of this Government's determination to do everything in its power to rescue these people. He further advised Cretzianu that this Government would keep in mind any continued collaboration with the Germans by the Rumanian Government. He emphasized that Rumania in her own interests would be well advised to permit the departure of Jews and other minorities.

Dissolution of Transnistrian Camp Accomplished. Cretzianu stated his belief that if the military commander in Transnistria received instructions from Antonescu, he would protect the refugee population there. He feared that a rapid advance on the part of the Russian Army toward Rumania might cause German military authorities to take over complete control of Transnistria. If time permitted, however, Cretzianu was of the opinion that protection for the people concerned could be arranged. Toward that end, he agreed to send an urgent message to Bucharest recommending that efforts be made at once to transfer the Transnistrian population to the interior of Rumania.1/

In connection with a proposed evacuation by sea of up to 5,000 Jewish children from Rumania, Cretzianu gave definite assurances to Hirschmann that the necessary transportation and exit visas would be provided.

A few days later Hirschmann was informed by Cretzianu that he had received a reply from his government to the effect that Rumania had agreed to transfer to Rumania proper all Jews held at the camp in Transnistria and would also facilitate in any possible manner the emigration of Jews from Rumania.2/ On March 20, 1944, word was received from the International Red Cross to the effect that this movement had begun and that 48,000 Jewish refugees had been removed from Transnistria.3/ The complete disbandment of this infamous camp and the repatriation of those interned was later confirmed by refugees reaching Turkey from Rumania, as well as by Minister Cretzianu himself in July 1944, in the course of a subsequent conference with Hirschmann.4/

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- 1/ Cable No. 440 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944, comprising document 226.
  - 2/ Cable No. 474 from Ankara dated March 16, 1944, comprising document 227.
  - 3/ Cable No. 497 from Ankara dated March 20, 1944, comprising document 228.
  - 4/ Cable No. 1230 from Ankara dated July 7, 1944, comprising document 229.

Impasse Created by Lack of Palestine Certificates. Word reaching the Board in the early part of 1944 indicated that Jews who could prove that Palestine was their ultimate destination were being allowed by Rumanian authorities to proceed in that direction. An impasse had been created, however, by lack of Palestine certificates on the basis of which proof could be submitted to Rumanian authorities as to ultimate destinations. Board Representative Hirschmann was asked to investigate the authenticity of the reports received by the Board in this connection.1/

Board negotiations in Ankara with British and Turkish authorities eventually resulted in the elimination of much of the red tape which had impeded emigration from Rumania; an agreement between Ambassador Steinhardt and the Turkish Foreign Office, in particular, providing for the transportation to the Syrian border of emigrants from Rumania reaching Turkey "illegally" by sea, did much to enable the escape of thousands of endangered persons.2/

Jewish Leaders Held in Bucharest. In May 1944 the Board received word from London that of a large group of persons who had been arrested in Bucharest for their activity in aiding the escape of Jewish refugees from Hungary and other areas all but 30 had been released. These 30 persons were said to be facing immediate trial.3/

The Board immediately asked the United States Consul General in Jerusalem to attempt to obtain further details with respect to the persons detained and the circumstances surrounding their detention. Information also was requested as to the identity of the Hungarian officials responsible for reported deportations from Sub-Carpatho-Russia and for persecutions in Hungary. The Consul General was requested to inform Ambassador Steinhardt when this information was received.4/ Ambassador Steinhardt was asked, at his discretion, to request the International Red Cross delegate in Ankara to communicate with Rumanian Minister Cretzianu and remind the latter of the assurances he had previously given Board Representative Hirschmann to the effect that such persecutions would not occur. Ambassador Steinhardt was also requested to press for the release of the persons detained and for permission for them to leave Rumania.5/

1/ Cable No. 221 to Ankara dated March 20, 1944.

2/ See Rescue to and through Turkey for a more detailed account of evacuations by sea from Constanza to Istanbul.

3/ Cable No. 3642 from London dated May 4, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 101 to Jerusalem dated May 11, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 440 to Ankara dated May 17, 1944.

The Jewish Agency for Palestine subsequently reported that the number of persons still under arrest had been reduced to 12 or 15. The name of one Hungarian official allegedly involved in the Hungarian persecutions was also forwarded by the Jewish Agency.1/

In July 1944 the Board called upon Board Representative Hirschmann for a further report on the matter, relaying the belief of a refugee who had just arrived in Jerusalem from Rumania that intervention regarding the fate of the arrested Jews might produce results. According to this refugee, it was not out of the question that, in view of the military situation and as a result of such intervention, the proceedings might be wholly suspended and the persons released.2/

On July 30, 1944, Hirschmann reported that he had been reliably informed that the leader of the persons in the residual detained group was at liberty in Rumania. Since colleagues of this person in Istanbul inferred that the entire group was probably also at liberty, no further action was taken in the matter.3/

Board for Jewish Emigration Established by Rumania. On June 21, 1944, Ambassador Steinhardt cabled highly encouraging news from Ankara to the effect that the Rumanian Government had decided to create an interdepartmental board for Jewish emigration under the supervision of the Prime Minister, and to establish an emigration office under the direction of the representative in Bucharest of the Jewish Agency. It was also reported that Rumania would implement this action by making one or more Rumanian vessels available for the transportation of Jewish refugees.4/

Information reaching the Board through Board Representative McClelland in Bern tended to confirm this reported softening of the official Rumanian attitude toward Jews. According to sources considered by McClelland to be reliable, the Rumanian Government issued confidential instructions to border control authorities to facilitate the admission of Jewish refugees from Hungary for transit through Rumanian territory.5/

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1/ Unnumbered cable from Jerusalem dated May 18, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 606 to Ankara dated July 4, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1392 from Ankara dated July 30, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 1125 from Ankara dated June 21, 1944, comprising document 230; see also Cable No. 1218 from Ankara dated July 5, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 3867 from Bern dated June 17, 1944.

Contradictory Reports Received. A cable from Minister Harrison in Bern reported a somewhat earlier and contradictory story in a Berlin newspaper. According to this account, the Rumanian Minister of Justice, because of the influx of Jews presumably from Hungary and Poland, had issued a decree providing the death sentence as punishment for foreign Jews illegally entering Rumania, with a similar penalty for persons making possible such entries.1/

Sale of Two Vessels Proposed by Rumanians. A communication from Minister Johnson in Stockholm tended to bear out the reports from Ankara and Bern to the effect that the Rumanian attitude toward Jews had been considerably softened. According to Minister Johnson's report, the Director of Service Maritime Roumaine, a Rumanian Government enterprise, during a visit to Stockholm had indicated that the Rumanian Government was extremely anxious to sell two of its vessels, the "S. S. Transylvania" and the "S. S. Bessarabia," currently tied up at Istanbul. These were said to be virtually new combined passenger-and-cargo vessels, each with sleeping accommodations for 550 persons, in first-class condition, and available for immediate use. It was asserted that on short trips these vessels could accommodate over 2,000 persons each.

The Rumanian official from whom Minister Johnson's information was obtained specifically suggested that the vessels might be purchased for evacuations from Constanza. The preliminary figure mentioned was also significant — 12,000,000 kronor for both vessels. The original cost of each was said to have been 12,000,000 kronor and a current valuation of 35,000,000 kronor was cited for the two vessels. In the event the boats were to be purchased by either the International Red Cross or the Swedish Red Cross, it was asserted that the Rumanians would guarantee safe-conduct and would also guarantee, as a condition of sale, the obtaining of German safe conduct for the vessels. It was further proposed that the purchase price of the vessels be deposited in Sweden with a guarantee that the funds be available for the purchase of goods for delivery in Rumania after the war. These goods would be held blocked in Sweden in the name of the group or organization purchasing or chartering the vessels.2/ The Board cabled Representative Hirschmann in Ankara the details concerning this proposal,3/ but military developments prevented the realization of the proposed purchases.

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1/ Cable No. 3914 from Bern dated June 19, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2538 from Stockholm dated July 9, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 641 to Ankara dated July 17, 1944.



Conferences Again Held with Cretzianu. Following Board Representative Hirschmann's return to Turkey in June 1944, informal conferences were again held with Rumanian Minister Cretzianu. In the course of one of these discussions on July 6, 1944, the Rumanian Minister asserted that his Government was making determined efforts to assist in the transportation of Jews from Rumania. However, Rumania's efforts in this direction, it was asserted, had been hampered considerably by the bombing of Floesti and Bucharest and the ensuing chaos had increased the difficulties involved in such evacuations. Assistance in expediting the embarkation of refugees on ships at Constanza was also promised. The subsequent successful completion of the voyage of the "S. S. Kazbek" tended to confirm Cretzianu's promise in this respect.1/

Minister Cretzianu also confidentially advised Representative Hirschmann that the Rumanians were unanimously anxious to withdraw from the war provided Rumania did not become another Italy; it was felt that such a step at that time, however, would be certain to insure complete German occupation.2/

In response to Board Representative Hirschmann's request for information concerning the newly organized Rumanian Committee for Emigration, the Rumanian Minister later forwarded a formal reply through the International Red Cross representative. In this note Minister Cretzianu indicated that an Inter-Ministerial Commission had been set up in May 1944, under his own chairmanship, for the purpose of organizing Jewish emigration, either by means of medium-sized ships flying a foreign flag or by means of ships of greater tonnage which the Rumanian Government itself might charter for the purpose. The note concluded with the hope that international organizations concerned with the question of Jewish emigration would give the Commission their full support.3/

Specific Requests Addressed to Cretzianu. A further meeting was arranged for Board Representative Hirschmann and the Rumanian Minister on July 21, 1944, again through the International Red Cross. In view of the deadlock that was preventing the departure

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1/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ Cable No. 1230 from Ankara dated July 7, 1944; comprising document 229; see also Cable No. 1285 from Ankara dated July 15, 1944.

3/ Cable No 1321 from Ankara dated July 20, 1944, comprising document 231.

from Constanza of certain vessels by means of which it was hoped that further evacuations could be accomplished,<sup>1/</sup> Representative Hirschmann asked that Minister Cretzianu ascertain the reasons for this stalemate. The Rumanian Minister also was asked to urge his government to facilitate by all possible means the departure of these vessels, and he agreed to do so.

Since it had been reported in Istanbul that certain Rumanian political personalities were seeking to proceed from Rumania to Turkey by means of refugee ships, inquiry was made as to the veracity of this report. Minister Cretzianu asserted that there were two categories of politicians in Rumania who might conceivably undertake such escapes: the so-called liberals and politicians seeking to "desert the sinking ship." He went on to declare that he would work against the efforts of the latter to secure Turkish visas. Representative Hirschmann gained the impression from this interview that the Rumanian Minister was actually speaking for his government and was searching more intensively for means of assisting in the rescue and transportation of refugees through and from Rumania.

In response to Representative Hirschmann's request that Rumania issue without delay thousands of transit visas to Jews in Hungary, who would remain in Rumania only long enough to embark on vessels leaving Constanza, Minister Cretzianu promised immediately to "warmly and strongly recommend to Bucharest" that this request be granted.<sup>2/</sup>

As a result of these representations and of the Rumanian Government's obvious desire to win the good will of the United States, there were later indications to confirm the assumption that a more humane approach had been adopted in the treatment of Rumanian minorities. A general relaxation of anti-Jewish measures followed, and the clandestine entry of large numbers of endangered Hungarians was condoned.<sup>3/</sup>

Issue of Transit Visas Arranged. In July 1944, as an experimental matter and in an effort to ascertain whether the availability of United States visas would be of assistance in securing the release of members of persecuted groups from enemy-controlled areas, authorization was sent by the State Department at the Board's request to consular officers in Turkey, calling for the issuance of United States visas to four children then in

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<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue to and through Turkey.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1365 from Ankara dated July 25, 1944, comprising document 232.

<sup>3/</sup> See Rescue from Hungary.

Rumania upon their arrival in Turkey, subject to their meeting statutory immigration requirements. Palestine certificates had been issued to these children, whose parents were in the United States, and to an uncle and aunt who were to accompany them from Rumania. Turkish transit visas were requested for this group of six, and Swiss authorities were asked to intervene with the Rumanian and Bulgarian Governments in an effort to secure the necessary exit and transit visas.<sup>1/</sup> All of the necessary visas were subsequently obtained, and the aunt and two children arrived in Istanbul in October 1944.<sup>2/</sup> This case was not regarded as a satisfactory test of the plan for obtaining Turkish transit visas, however. Indications were that, while such visas were requested of the Turkish Foreign Office by the United States Embassy in Ankara on the basis of United States immigration visas for the children, the visas for all of these persons were in fact granted on the basis of their possession of Palestine immigration certificates.

Report on Rumanian Attitude Relayed by Vatican. According to word received by the Board from the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, on August 21, 1944, the Apostolic Nunciature in Bucharest was informed by the Rumanian Government that the latter was disposed to remedy its treatment of Jews. At the same time, it was pointed out that concentration camps for Jews no longer existed in Rumania.<sup>3/</sup>

Capitulation of Rumanian Government. For a period Rumania had been a field of military operations, thereby effectively sealing up all emigration from Hungary through Rumania. With the capitulation of the Rumanian Government on August 23, 1944, the possibilities of further rescues from Rumania were fundamentally altered.<sup>4/</sup>

Revocation of Anti-Semitic Ordinances Reported. Board Representative Hirschmann advised the Board early in September 1944 that, according to a report current in Ankara, a royal decree issued by the Rumanian Government had restored equal rights to all Rumanians without regard to race or religion. All royal decrees based on differentiation of race or religion were said to have been abolished.<sup>5/</sup> This report was subsequently confirmed.

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 650 to Ankara dated July 21, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> The other two children were among those who lost their lives in the "Mefkura" disaster (see Rescue to and through Turkey); the uncle remained in Rumania for family reasons.

<sup>3/</sup> Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated August 29, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Dispatch No. 808 from Ankara dated October 4, 1944, comprising a summary report from Board Representative Hirschmann.

<sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 1695 from Ankara dated September 9, 1944, comprising document 233.

Relief Sorely Needed in Bucharest following Liberation.

Toward the end of 1944 the Board began to receive reports and appeals concerning the plight of Jews in liberated Balkan countries. Although the anti-Jewish laws had been abolished in both Rumania and Bulgaria, word received through Board representatives abroad,<sup>1/</sup> from Jewish sources, from the press, and eventually through the United States Mission in Bucharest <sup>2/</sup> indicated that adequate measures designed to implement the revocation of these laws had not been taken, and that several hundred thousand Jews in those countries remained in dire need. The Jews of Rumania, according to these reports, had been entirely reduced to dependence upon charitable assistance. They were unable to reoccupy homes from which they had been evacuated. They were generally unable to secure repossession of their businesses, and even where they did, no stocks or materials were available. Nor were they able to obtain reemployment in the positions they formerly occupied, since this would have involved the displacement of non-Jewish employees. This desperate situation was aggravated by an apparently renewed influx of refugees from Hungary and Transylvania.

While relief problems in Rumania or any other liberated area were not considered to be within the scope of the Board's activities except to the extent that they might hinder the reception of further refugees,<sup>3/</sup> the Board felt that the situation should be explored in the light of its relation to possibilities for accelerating further escapes from Hungary into Rumania. Efforts were therefore made to have Board Representative Katzki visit Rumania and Bulgaria for the purpose of ascertaining the facts of the situation. When permission was sought from Soviet authorities for Katzki to enter Rumania, however, this request was declined. Three reasons were given for this decision: 1) Rumania was considered a theatre of military operations; 2) a Jewish "representative" was already in Rumania to look after Jewish refugees; and 3) it was considered undesirable to have a large number of civilians enter Rumania at that time.<sup>4/</sup>

Efforts had also been made to facilitate the entrance of a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee into these liberated areas in order that this organization might

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cables No. 1988 and 2130 from Ankara dated October 18 and November 8, 1944; Cables No. 272 and 355 from Caserta dated September 3 and 11, 1944; Cable No. 6932 from Bern dated October 19, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Dispatch No. 39 from Bucharest dated December 22, 1944.
- <sup>3/</sup> Circular Cable to Ankara, Stockholm, Lisbon, Caserta, London, and Bern dated September 7, 1944, comprising document 224.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 80 from Bucharest dated December 30, 1944.



have someone on the spot to develop and put into operation urgently needed relief programs. Permission for this representative to enter Rumania was likewise refused by Soviet authorities.

Meanwhile, as a temporary measure, the Board facilitated the issuance of the necessary licenses to the Joint Distribution Committee for the transfer of large sums to Rumania through the latter's representative in Switzerland; the Board also arranged for the acquisition of the Swiss francs needed for the transaction.

Information which the Board had received on the dire circumstances prevailing in Rumania and Bulgaria was also relayed to other interested private agencies and to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. The Intergovernmental Committee in turn was pressed for action on its part in Rumania. In this connection, the Board facilitated approval by this Government of two specific proposals by the Intergovernmental Committee for assistance in Rumania. First, the Board approved the Committee's proposal to use the Joint Distribution Committee as its operating agent under a scheme whereby the Intergovernmental Committee would reimburse the Joint Distribution Committee for local borrowings made in Rumania. Second, the Board facilitated approval by both the State and Treasury Departments of the Intergovernmental Committee's proposal to transfer funds to Rumania via Switzerland. In the interest of speed, this was done without prior clearance with Soviet authorities.

The question of rehabilitating Rumanian Jews was subsequently referred to the Allied Control Commission through its British and United States members.

## II J. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Shortly after the Board was established, officials dealing with refugee problems for the Czechoslovak Government-in Exile were informed by Ambassador Winant in London of the Board's rescue and relief objectives. These Czech officials fully endorsed the objectives outlined and signified their desire to cooperate to the fullest possible extent. 1/

Mass Deportations Had Occurred. As the result of a Slovak law enacted in May 1942, an estimated 60,000 Jews had been deported from Slovak territory by early 1944. During the first few weeks of the Board's existence great numbers of the Jews who remained in Slovakia moved clandestinely into Hungary as a place of relative safety. The Board at once took steps to facilitate the efforts of private agencies to increase this traffic to Hungary and beyond. 2/

It was not long, however, before the familiar pattern of Nazi oppression was renewed in Slovakia. Reports reaching the Board from both Sweden and Switzerland indicated that Slovakian authorities had undertaken the registration of all Jews in Slovakia, including Christians, as a prelude, it was feared, to their deportation. In addition, some 2,700 Jews had been interned at the concentration camps of Sered, Novaky, and Vyhne. The estimated 18,000 to 20,000 other Jews who remained in Slovakia were reported to be in an increasingly precarious situation.

In order to impress upon the Slovakian Government the fact that this Government objected to the threatened deportations and would take into account any part played by it in the deportation or other persecution of Jews in Slovakia, Vatican assistance was enlisted in communicating these views and in the effort to persuade President Tiso of Slovakia, himself a Roman Catholic priest, and his associates to refrain from further aiding and abetting the Nazis in their persecution of innocent minorities. 3/

1/ Cable No. 30 from London dated March 1, 1944.

2/ See Rescue from Hungary.

3/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through the Vatican.

Funds Provided for Rescue and Relief. In March 1944 United Czechoslovak Relief (subsequently American Relief for Czechoslovakia) applied for Board approval and assistance in securing a Treasury license to remit funds for certain rescue and relief purposes in enemy and enemy-occupied territory, including Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France. This program was developed and sponsored by the National Congress of Industrial Organizations War Relief Committee and the Labor League for Human Rights--United Nations Relief--of the American Federation of Labor. The necessary funds were made available by special appropriation from the National War Fund.

The Board worked out the details of this special labor relief program and obtained the necessary licenses. Remittances totaling \$350,000 were made to trustees in London who carried on the operations from that city. 1/

The purposes for which these funds were utilized, as reported by the trustees, included the relief of families in Czechoslovakia of executed persons and political prisoners; the rescue of persecuted people from Central Europe to neutral and Allied countries; the relief of persecuted people hiding in Czechoslovakia and thus far unable to escape; the relief of Jews confined in ghettos in Czechoslovakia; the relief of Czechoslovak Jews transported to Poland; the relief of Czechoslovak women and children refugees in France, who were for the most part families of Czechoslovak soldiers; the purchase of medicines sent into Czechoslovakia; the support of families of men killed during the uprising in Slovakia; and the emergency support of Czechoslovak citizens deported by the Germans to France, Belgium, and Holland. 2/

Other rescue and relief operations on behalf of endangered persons in Czechoslovakia were made possible by substantial amounts of money which the Board enabled private American organizations to remit to Switzerland and Sweden. 3/

Relief Provided for Jews in Czech Internment. In an effort to provide some measure of relief to the thousands held in concentration camps in Czechoslovakia, the Board worked out programs with both the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Vaad Hahatsala Emergency Committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis under which substantial numbers of food and clothing parcels were sent into Czechoslovak territory. 4/

1/ Cables No. 2518 and 6969 to London dated March 31 and August 30, 1944; see also Cable No. 8650 to London dated October 20, 1944.

2/ Report of trustees dated November 29, 1944.

3/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland and Rescue to and through Sweden.

4/ See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations.



Precarious Situation Reported. As a result of the Board's psychological warfare campaign, particularly its messages and appeals transmitted through the Vatican, as well as the representations made by the Vatican on its own initiative toward a more humane treatment of minority groups, the situation of Jews in Slovakia grew less acute and remained relatively quiet during the summer of 1944. Information received by the Board in the fall of 1944, however, indicated that the situation there had again deteriorated; arrests had been made and Jewish deportations were expected to start momentarily. 1/ The Board requested Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen in Stockholm to request the Swedish Government to give any assistance possible to those arrested. The matter was discussed with the Swedish Foreign Office, which was not very hopeful of results since the only Swedish Government representative in Slovakia was an honorary consul with whom the Swedish Government had no cipher or pouch communications. Nevertheless, special efforts were made through the Special Attache to the Swedish Legation in Budapest to extend help to the individuals arrested in Slovakia and to obtain information concerning the entire situation.

Board Representative McClelland in Switzerland was also advised of the threatened deportations and requested to give all possible assistance to any undertaking that could be initiated in Bern to save the Jews in Slovakia. 2/

According to one report received by the Board, S. S. men and Hlinka guards blocked off the Jewish quarter of Bratislava one night toward the end of September 1944 and conducted a brutal house-to-house round-up of several thousand persons, all of whom were taken to the concentration camp of Sered. From 5,000 to 7,000 Jews (the number was later found to be about 4,000) were reportedly thus concentrated in a camp originally constructed for 1,000 persons. These Jews at Sered represented approximately one-third of the remaining Jewish population of Slovakia; the other two-thirds were believed to be either in Partisan-controlled territory or still in hiding. Following this general round-up, an initial group of 2,000 Jews were deported from Sered. The name of the official responsible for this action as well as for a number of past brutalities was also furnished the Board. 3/

Holders of Latin American Papers Deported. In the fall of 1944 the Board learned of still another anti-Jewish action in Slovakia. Many Jews with American and Latin American documents had been

1/ Cable No. 6083 from Bern dated September 15, 1944, comprising document 234.

2/ Cables No. 3186 and 3245 to Bern dated September 14 and 20, 1944; see also Special Negotiations (German proposals through Switzerland).

3/ Cable No. 6839 from Bern dated October 13, 1944; see also Cable No. 7594 from Bern dated November 17, 1944, comprising document 235.



concentrated at Marianka near the town of Topolcany, presumably as a "protective" measure. It was not long, however, before the mass deportation of these persons was begun. 1/

In relaying information received about the various deportations, Board Representative McClelland pointed to the significance of the fact that, until the termination of certain of these actions in mid-October 1944, the Gestapo had delayed granting a German transit visa to the International Red Cross delegate who had been scheduled to leave for Bratislava in September. 2/

Protests Made by International Red Cross. When the Red Cross delegate finally reached Slovakia and learned at first hand of these actions, he protested vigorously to Slovak authorities against the measures being taken. Slovak authorities were reported at first to have declared that it was impossible for them to intercede on behalf of the Jews because such a course might prejudice the higher interests of the Slovak state. They were later said, however, to have addressed a note to the Germans seeking to have the Jewish question settled in a humane way, but German authorities allegedly refused to "receive" it.

The attitude of the Slovak authorities apparently reversed itself materially in November 1944. On November 16, 1944, a Slovakian decree was published under which all Jews were ordered to present themselves in four days at the town hall of Bratislava to be interned at the camp of Sered. Only about 50 Jews were said to have obeyed this order; the others had gone into hiding. New representations were made by the International Red Cross delegate at this point, but to no avail. 3/

Red Cross Denied Permission To Visit Sered. Efforts were also made by the Red Cross delegate to obtain permission to visit the Slovakian camps where Jews were concentrated, particularly the camp at Sered. Permission to visit Sered was denied by German authorities in Slovakia on the ground that Sered was a military camp. A request for such permission was subsequently made by the International Red Cross through its delegation in Berlin, but this also proved of no avail.

The International Red Cross delegate in Slovakia was, however, permitted to visit the camp at Marianka on two occasions in November 1944, prior to the transfer of many of its inmates to internment in

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1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

2/ Cable No. 7594 from Bern dated November 17, 1944, comprising document 235; see also Cable No. 7762 from Bern dated November 25, 1944.

3/ Letter from Bern dated February 1, 1945, enclosing report from the International Red Cross.

Germany, presumably at the camp of Bergen Belsen. Despite his intervention with the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Red Cross delegate proved powerless to prevent these deportations. 1/

United States Immigration Visas Granted. Under this Government's policy of granting visas to certain categories of endangered persons in enemy territory, a number of Slovakian Jewish families were found to be eligible for such protection. Word of this action was furnished the International Red Cross. Through the latter's delegate in Bratislava the Slovak authorities were fully informed in November 1944 of the availability of United States visas for these families in the hope that this fact might afford them protection. 2/

Vatican Assistance Again Sought. In September 1944, in view of the strong feeling in many quarters that energetic action on the part of the Vatican through the Tiso Government might still be able to help alleviate the situation, Myron Taylor in Rome was asked to make appropriate representations to the Pope. At the same time a letter along the same lines was addressed to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington. A report received by the Board to the effect that Slovak Minister Sidor was at that time at the Vatican was also relayed in the hope that advantage might be taken of Sidor's presence in bringing pressure to bear on the Slovak Government.

Several weeks later the Board learned that the Slovak Government, in response to renewed representations on the part of the Vatican, stated that when Slovak authorities protested against the deportation of Jews whom they had assembled in labor camps in Slovakia, the Germans alleged that the Jews in Slovakia had obtained arms from Partisan forces and could only be expected to fight the Germans in the event a favorable occasion arose; hence the determination to accomplish their deportation. 3/

Few Jews Left in Czechoslovakia. By December 1944, according to one report reaching the Board, all Jews in Slovakia had been taken into custody except for an estimated 900 persons in Bratislava and some 2,500 to 3,000 in the provinces who had remained successfully hidden. In the camp at Sered there then remained only about 150 persons, the majority of whom were half-Jews and Jewish partners of mixed marriages. Virtually all other Jews had been deported. 4/

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- 1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.
  - 2/ Letter from Bern dated February 1, 1945, enclosing report from the International Red Cross.
  - 3/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through the Vatican.
  - 4/ Cable No. 8050 from Bern dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 236.

A report from the United States Embassy in Moscow based on information received from a reliable source tended to confirm word previously received. Almost no Jews were found at the time of the liberation of the Ruthenian area; it was not immediately clear how many remained in Slovakia itself. Before German occupation there had been an estimated 120,000 Jews in those areas; as of the end of 1944 an estimated 20,000 Jews remained. The report added that lists of about 75,000 persons known to have been killed by the Germans had been given to the Czechoslovakian Government-in-Exile.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 5059 from Moscow dated December 30, 1944.

## II K. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE FROM GREECE

In Greece, as in other countries suffering occupation by the Axis, the old familiar pattern of persecution and deportation was once again repeated. It was estimated that some 60,000 Jews were involved in the German deportations to Poland from Greece during 1943 alone, and there was reason to believe that most of those sent to Poland were exterminated upon reaching their destinations.

Following the collapse of the Italian administration in Greece in the fall of 1943, the Germans began to adopt further discriminatory measures. As a result of the registration of Jews and other anti-Semitic measures which occupation authorities sought to enforce, thousands of Jews fled from their homes in the cities. Many of the 8,000 Jews in Athens were said to have found refuge in Christian homes and to have remained in hiding there. Throughout Greece as a whole, an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Jews were in hiding. 1/

By the time Greece was liberated there were only an estimated 8,500 Jews left in all of Greece. This represented only about 10 percent of the pre-war Jewish population of Greece, the remainder having been killed or deported. 2/

Movement Began in 1941. Because of the favorable geographic position of Greece, a considerable number of refugees succeeded in reaching Turkey and other neutral areas from Greece throughout the period of German occupation. The first of these refugees began to reach Turkish shores in April 1941, just before the completion of the German occupation.

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1/ Memorandum from the Legal Advisor of the Greek Foreign Office enclosed in Dispatch No. 107 from Cairo dated May 2, 1944; see also Dispatches No. 2458, 2680, and 3037 from Istanbul dated February 19, March 18, and May 27, 1944, respectively.

2/ Cable No. 325 from Athens dated April 2, 1945.



By late autumn of that year large numbers of persons had begun to flee the Greek islands. This movement continued on a smaller scale until the winter of 1942. At that time there was established a British-Greek escape service, operating from Izmir, for the purpose of encouraging and facilitating the departure of selected persons eligible for service with the free Greek forces in the Middle East.

By December of 1943, however, there was an almost complete stoppage in this organized rescue movement when EAM (the Greek underground) seized two boats operating in the British-Greek service and refused to allow further departures, except for Jews. This action on the part of the EAM was due to its insistence that it was the patriotic duty of all army men and officers to stay in the country to fight the enemy, rather than be evacuated to serve the Allied cause elsewhere.

In the early days of the movement many escape parties had been fired upon by Turkish guards. Some parties were prevented from landing, while others were ordered to get back into their boats and leave. Many refugees then began the practice of landing in isolated spots along the Turkish coast and destroying their boats.

In the sporadic escapes that continued following the creation of the Board, Greek refugees, once at sea, were reasonably safe from interference by the enemy. Except for the hazards of weather and unsuitable landing places, they had little to fear in the course of their voyages across the Aegean, the Mediterranean, the Ionian, and the Adriatic Seas. 1/

Declaration by Greek Government-in-Exile. Following the establishment of the Board and as a result of representations made by the United States Legation in Cairo, 2/ the Greek Government-in-Exile in March 1944, issued a declaration stating that it fully shared the views and feelings expressed in the statement issued by President Roosevelt on March 24, 1944, on atrocities against Jews and requesting all Greeks to assist in the escape, to neutral or free countries, of Jews and other victims of Nazi tyranny. 3/ The Office of War Information and the Greek Government-in-Exile broadcast this statement to Greece from Cairo and also publicized it in the local and foreign

1/ Dispatch No. 2628 from Istanbul, undated.

2/ Dispatch No. 81 from Cairo dated March 23, 1944.

3/ See also Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board (Hull Statement on Distomo Murders).

press. 1/ By thus publicizing the Greek declaration, it was hoped that cooperative efforts on the part of native villagers in facilitating escapes might be increased.

A memorandum stressing the great hunger and other hardships visited upon the Greek people as a result of German occupation was also prepared by the Greek Government-in-Exile and submitted to the Board through the Legation in Cairo.

Various reports were received by the Board to the effect that on March 24, 1944, all registered Jews in Athens were placed in a concentration camp. Registered Jews from the provinces were subsequently added. Any Jews not registered and any persons aiding such Jews were subject to immediate execution. 2/ In April 1944 refugees claiming Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish citizenship were segregated; other internees were loaded on trains for an unknown destination. An estimated 4,000 persons were so deported. 3/

Through Minister Harrison in Bern the Board asked the International Red Cross to bring all possible aid to these victims of Nazi oppression. 4/ The Board also immediately began negotiations with Spain, Portugal, and Turkey with a view to inducing those countries to extend protection to the refugees in Athens claiming such nationalities. 5/

While little information was available as to the fate of Jews in the provinces who escaped internment, it was thought

- 1/ Cable No. 95 from Cairo dated March 30, 1944, comprising document 237; see also Dispatches No. 86, 90, and 94, from Cairo dated April 3, April 7, and March 29, 1944, respectively.
- 2/ Unnumbered dispatch from Istanbul dated April 15, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 270R58 from Istanbul dated May 1, 1944; see also Dispatch No. 3068 from Istanbul dated June 3, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 1672 to Bern dated May 13, 1944, comprising document 238.
- 5/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Spanish Nationality, Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Portuguese Nationality, and Reinstatement of Turkish Citizenship to Certain Jewish Refugees.

that those who had been able to join the Partisans ran less risk of being exterminated by the Germans, since the latter apparently lacked sufficient forces to engage in the systematic pursuit of guerrilla warriors. 1/

Because of the German orders threatening death to any Christian caught aiding Jews and offering informers 50 percent of the property belonging to any Jew exposed to the Gestapo, it became increasingly difficult for the impoverished Jews of Greece to remain in hiding. Since the task of expanding evacuations from Greece seemed primarily a question of organization and financial support, the United States Consul General in Istanbul was asked to develop detailed suggestions for the evacuation to Turkey of Greek Jews and non-Greek refugees in cooperation with local patriots and the Allied escape services operating in that area. The Board also indicated that it would endeavor to arrange for the necessary funds and assistance. 2/ Reports of the internment and deportation of Jews, however, left small hope that organized evacuation from Greece could be effected on any large scale.

Temporary Refuge in Turkey. Intermittently throughout 1944 some 900 Jewish refugees from Greece and the Greek islands bound for Palestine managed to reach Turkey through the port of Izmir and through small ports on the Aegean without Turkish visas or other documents. While not formally consenting to the movement, Turkish authorities were prevailed upon to assist in the prompt transportation of these refugees to Palestine. 3/

Liberation. Toward the end of 1944 a final effort was made to increase the flow of refugees then in hiding in Greece. In the hope that evacuations might be considerably increased if Turkish authorities were to designate a base from which rescue operations might be undertaken, representatives of the United States Embassy in Ankara discussed the matter with the Turkish Foreign Office and obtained the latter's agreement to issue the necessary instructions. With this assurance, inquiry was made at Izmir by Board Representa-

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1/ Dispatch No. 126 from Cairo dated May 31, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 257 to Istanbul dated April 26, 1944, comprising document 239.

3/ Dispatch No. 808 from Ankara dated October 4, 1944; see also Cables No. 1595 and 130 from Ankara dated August 30, 1944, and January 25, 1945.

tive Katzki into the practicability of establishing such a base. Informed opinion there, however, was that the establishment of a special base in Turkey at that time to direct the evacuation of refugees from Greece was not warranted because of indications of an early evacuation of Greece by the Germans. These indications were borne out in the British occupation of Greece in October 1944.



## II L. RESCUE PROGRAMS: OTHER PROJECTS

PROPOSED REMOVAL OF SPANISH REFUGEES FROM NORTH AFRICA TO MEXICO. In a communication from Ambassador Winant in London in February 1944 the Board was asked to help expedite arrangements for the transfer of certain Spanish Republican refugees from North Africa to Mexico. This request was inspired by a letter to Ambassador Winant from the Intergovernmental Committee, which pointed out that the employment in North Africa of Spanish refugees who had been released from internment camps in 1943 was likely to decrease and also that hundreds of Spanish refugees who had been in the French Foreign Legion were likely soon to be demobilized. 1/

Since it was in the interest of the Board's program of effecting evacuations from Europe to French North Africa that the economy of that country not be unduly burdened with refugees whose relocation had previously been promised, the Board at once inquired through Ambassador Messersmith in Mexico City as to the status of the proposed removal of these Spanish refugees to Mexico.

The Mexican-Spanish Commission, the Board learned, had agreed to accept 1,600 of the refugees in question. The matter was subsequently referred to Gobernacion, the Mexican cabinet office concerned with immigration and related matters, for final approval. 2/

### PROPOSED EVACUATION TO PALESTINE OF REFUGEES ON MAURITIUS.

Shortly after the Board's establishment it was learned that the British had issued visas for a score of European Jewish scholars and rabbis in Europe permitting them to emigrate to the Island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. 3/ Other reports reaching the Board, however, had indicated that refugees already on Mauritius, including several hundred deported from Palestine for illegal entry, were in dire circumstances.

- 1/ Cable No. 1274 from London dated February 15, 1944, comprising document 24Q
- 2/ Cable No. 404 to Mexico City dated February 26 and Airgram No. A-710 from Mexico City dated March 7, 1944.
- 3/ Letter from the American Chapter of the Religious Emergency Council of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain dated January 31, 1944.

In order to determine whether or not Mauritius constituted a suitable haven for additional refugees from Axis oppression, the Board in a communication to the United States consular representative nearest the Island of Mauritius asked for a report on the total number and condition of refugees there. A request for suggestions as to possible relief measures was also made. 1/ The Board was advised that preliminary investigation had indicated that there were some 1,500 Jewish refugees being detained on Mauritius, 600 of them from Czechoslovakia, the rest from Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. Widespread malnutrition was reported to be prevalent. 2/ These refugees had been aboard the steamer Patria when it exploded mysteriously in Haifa Harbor in November 1940 after its passengers, fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe, had been refused permission to land in Palestine because they had no passports. The explosion, which occurred while the refugees were awaiting transportation to Mauritius, resulted in at least 55 known deaths and 190 missing.

On April 24, 1944, however, in response to a formal inquiry, the British Colonial Secretary at Port Louis on Mauritius stated that, while Britain appreciated the concern indicated, it was not proposed to take advantage of the assistance offered since the detainees were being "well cared for." 3/

Reports of malnutrition and hardship persisted, however, and following repeated representations on the part of interested groups in Great Britain, the British Colonial Secretary on February 21, 1945, announced that a decision had at last been made to admit to Palestine the Jewish refugees then on Mauritius. 4/ These persons, numbering 1,300, were finally permitted to land at Haifa in August 1945, after nearly five years of internment on Mauritius. 5/

FRENCH RELIEF FUND OPERATIONS. Upon the Board's recommendation, a license was issued by the Treasury Department in June 1944 to the French Relief Fund permitting it to carry on relief and rescue operations in enemy or enemy-occupied territory. 6/ Specific

- 1/ Cable No. 8 to Durban (Natal, Union of South Africa) dated March 6, 1944, comprising document 241.
- 2/ Cable No. 9 from Durban dated March 20, 1944, comprising document 242.
- 3/ Dispatch No. 155 from Durban dated May 20, 1944.
- 4/ Statement issued to the press by the British Embassy in Washington dated March 1, 1945.
- 5/ Associated Press dispatch from Haifa dated August 27, 1945.
- 6/ Cable No. 5256 to London dated July 4, 1944, comprising document 243.

objectives cited in the application for Board approval of the proposed operations included the relief of persecuted persons in hiding in France; the evacuation, whenever possible, to neutral or Allied countries of persons whose lives were endangered by Vichy occupation authorities; the relief of French citizens imprisoned by the Gestapo or other German authorities or by Vichy authorities for anti-Nazi activities; and the relief of families of such prisoners and of persons executed by German or Vichy authorities for their anti-Nazi activities. This program was developed and sponsored by the National Congress of Industrial Organizations War Relief Committee and the Labor League for Human Rights -- United Nations Relief -- of the American Federation of Labor.

\$150,000 for these operations was remitted to trustees in London. These funds were obtained from the National War Fund upon the approval and recommendation of the Board and the Provisional Government of the French Republic. 1/ Following the liberation of France the use of half of these funds was authorized for relief purposes in liberated France, with the approval of the interested agencies.

POLISH RESCUE AND RELIEF. In January 1944, Polish refugees in large numbers were moving clandestinely to Hungary as a place of relative safety, and the Board facilitated the efforts of private agencies to increase this flow of refugees to Hungary and beyond. 2/

In the summer of 1944 arrangements were made with Polish War Relief of the United States of America, Inc., and the President's War Relief Control Board for allocations totaling \$400,000 to be sent to Polish trustees in London for rescue and relief activities in enemy and enemy-occupied territory; the Treasury Department issued licenses authorizing these remittances. 3/ The contemplated operations included relief for persons hiding from the Gestapo; aid in financing the escape of persecuted persons from Poland; aid to persons in prisons, concentration camps, and labor battalions; aid to persons imprisoned in the ghettos of Poland; and aid to families of persons executed or imprisoned.

Only about \$50,000 of these funds was actually expended, however, before the liberation of Poland was completed. 4/ these funds having been sent into Poland through underground channels. When

1/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: Other United States Agencies (War Relief Control Board).

2/ See Rescue from Hungary.

3/ Cables No. 6324 and 353 to London dated August 10, 1944, and January 16, 1945.

4/ Cable No. 4475 from London dated May 3, 1945.

the unexpended balance of these funds thus became available for other American Labor-sponsored projects, \$75,000 thereof was re-allocated to finance Labor relief operations in liberated Norway. 1/

In addition to the funds sent to London, the Board arranged for \$25,000 to be sent by Polish War Relief to Sweden to assist in a program of rescue and relief operations recommended by Board Representative Olsen. 2/ These operations included aid to Polish refugees in Sweden, relief to children's institutions and persons inside Poland, and the rescue of additional Polish refugees from neighboring enemy-occupied territory to Sweden. 3/

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1/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

2/ Cable No. 1818 to Stockholm dated September 12, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 2569 and 2668 from Stockholm dated July 11 and 18, 1944, comprising documents 244 and 245.



## II M. RESCUE PROGRAMS: SPECIAL NEGOTIATIONS

With the defection in Nazi ranks evidenced by the attack on Hitler's life and the mounting successes of the Allied armies in the spring and summer of 1944 the Gestapo showed signs of shifting their interest from the biological aspects of Jewish extermination to the purely military benefits in labor, goods, and money which could be derived from the Jews in their hands. Some German officials, frightened by world reaction to the persecution of Jews in Hungary and by the rapid deterioration of the German military situation, hoped to gain a measure of personal protection through better treatment of Jewish hostages under their control.

Brandt Proposal Received in Turkey. These attitudes were typified by a series of German-inspired proposals which came to the attention of the Board commencing in May 1944. The first German proposal was brought out of Hungary by Joel Brandt, a member of the Budapest Jewish Community who was flown to Istanbul on a German courier plane. He brought with him a German offer to halt the deportations and extermination of the Jews in Hungary in return for 200 tons of tea, 800 tons of coffee, 2 million cakes of soap, and 10,000 trucks.<sup>1/</sup> During the discussions with Brandt in which the Board's representative in Turkey, Ira A. Hirschmann, participated <sup>2/</sup> with the approval of the Board and the State and War Departments, it was revealed that the Germans would be willing to agree that these trucks would be used only on the "Eastern front." The nature of the offer indicated that the Germans were attempting to use the Jews in their hands not only as pawns for possible economic and personal benefit but also as a means to create dissension between the United States and Great Britain on one side and Russia on the other.<sup>3/</sup> The offer was, of course, rejected and the Russian Government fully advised.<sup>4/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 950 from Ankara dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 246.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 514 to Ankara dated June 9, 1944, comprising document 247.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1641 to Moscow dated July 7, 1944, comprising document 248; repeated to Ankara, Cairo, and London.

<sup>4/</sup> For Russian attitude toward discussions of this type see cable No. 2184 from Moscow dated June 19, 1944, comprising document 249. See also Airgram No. A-27 from Moscow dated January 29, 1945, comprising document 250.

German Proposal in Lisbon Followed by Discussions in Switzerland with Saly Mayer. Then followed overtures by the German authorities through Portugal, Switzerland, and Sweden for the discussion of terms for the release of Jews in Nazi hands. The proposal received in Lisbon suggested that discussions be conducted with a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The United States Government refused to permit any discussions involving a private American citizen.<sup>1/</sup> Then followed a German attempt to initiate negotiations with Saly Mayer, a Swiss citizen, leader of the Swiss Jewish Community and representative in Switzerland of the Joint Distribution Committee. As proof of their good faith, the Germans agreed to deliver a convoy of 500 Jewish internees from the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland and to cease deportations from Hungary.<sup>2/</sup> The German negotiators were headed by the S.S. commercial representative for Hungary, Kurt Becher, who claimed to be close to Himmler and the notorious Karl Eichmann charged with deporting Jews from Hungary.<sup>3/</sup> In view of the rapidly changing military situation and in view of the fact that any time gained might operate in favor of the endangered Jews in Nazi hands, the War Refugee Board, with the approval of the State Department, agreed to interpose no objection to a meeting taking place between Saly Mayer and the Gestapo authorities. The Board made it clear, however, that ransom transactions could not be entered into or authorized by the United States Government and it specified that Saly Mayer could only participate as a Swiss citizen and not as a representative of any American organization.<sup>4/</sup>

There followed a protracted series of meetings between Saly Mayer and the German representatives, with the full knowledge of the Board and the State Department.<sup>5/</sup> The British and Russian Governments also were kept advised.<sup>6/</sup> Through the ingenuity and perseverance of Saly Mayer, every imaginable dilatory tactic was employed and talks continued for month after month.<sup>7/</sup> Mayer

- 1/ Memorandum from Executive Director Pehle to Secretary Stettinius dated July 27, 1944, comprising document 251, and Cable No. 2112 to Lisbon dated July 28, 1944, comprising document 252.
- 2/ Cable No. 5197 from Bern dated August 11, 1944, comprising document 253.
- 3/ See Final Report of Board Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated July 31, 1945.
- 4/ Cable No. 2867 to Bern dated August 21, 1944, comprising document 254.
- 5/ Cable No. 2990 to Bern dated August 30, 1944, comprising document 255, and Cable No. 6110 from Bern dated September 16, 1944, comprising document 256.
- 6/ Cable No. 8780 to London dated October 21, 1944, comprising document 257; repeated to Moscow.
- 7/ See Cable No. 3932 to Bern dated November 18, 1944, comprising document 258, for Board attitude concerning continuation of the Saly Mayer discussions.

finally succeeded in shifting from discussions of ransom to the consideration of his proposal that in return for the halting of exterminations by the Germans he would arrange for relief supplies to be sent into Germany through the International Red Cross to keep the Jews alive.<sup>1/</sup> The Mayer proposal was so vague that the clarification of its terms made delaying possible until the hostilities in Europe ceased.

At one stage in the negotiations, the Board with the concurrence of the State, War and Treasury Departments permitted the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to transfer five million dollars to a special restricted account in Switzerland solely in order that Saly Mayer have something tangible with which to hold open the negotiations and for the gaining of more precious time.<sup>2/</sup> No payments were ever made from the account and the fund was returned to the Joint Distribution Committee at the close of the war.

Tangible Results Obtained During Saly Mayer Discussions With Germans. In addition to obtaining invaluable first-hand information concerning the progress and plans of Nazi treatment of Jews, there were other more tangible results during the course of these protracted discussions between Saly Mayer and Becher. Two groups of Jews from Hungary totaling 1673 persons were brought to Switzerland from the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen as a token of good faith on the part of the German negotiators. The deportation to Auschwitz of upwards of 200,000 Jews remaining in Budapest in August 1944 was cancelled and transports of some 17,000 Hungarian Jews headed for Auschwitz were diverted to Austria. Furthermore, tacit S.S. agreement was obtained to permit the International Red Cross in Budapest to shelter 3,000 Jewish children, and facilities were obtained for the procurement and distribution of foodstuffs and clothing to some 7,000 Jews in labor camps in the Vienna region. In April 1945, 69 prominent Jews from Slovakia and Hungary reached Switzerland.<sup>3/</sup>

The "Misy Affair" in Switzerland. A second series of meetings between high Nazi circles and a Swiss citizen for the release of Jewish deportees came to the attention of the Board in December 1944. <sup>4/</sup> The negotiations were conducted in Germany by Jean-Marie

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 8118 from Bern dated December 13, 1944, comprising document 259, and Cable No. 4273 to Bern dated December 19, 1944, comprising document 260.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 8390 from Bern dated December 28, 1944, comprising document 261, and Cable No. 102 to Bern dated January 6, 1945, comprising document 262.
- <sup>3/</sup> Final Report from Board Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated July 31, 1945.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 4014 to Bern dated November 28, 1944, comprising document 263, and Cable No. 8045 from Bern dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 264.



Musy, a former Swiss Federal Counselor, with Himmler and other high S.S. officers. Whatever his motives,<sup>1/</sup> Musy, who claimed to be an old personal friend of Himmler, succeeded in obtaining the release to Switzerland of 1200 Jews from the Theresienstadt concentration camp on February 7, 1945.<sup>2/</sup> Shortly before the arrival of these refugees in Switzerland, Musy had approached Isaac Sternbuch, Swiss representative of the American Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee, whom Musy had kept advised of his dealings with the Nazis, for a payment of one million dollars.<sup>3/</sup> Sternbuch cabled his organization in the United States urging that this sum be transferred to Switzerland at once, stating that the German release of additional convoys of Jews depended upon the receipt of this sum by Musy. The Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee, after having arranged to borrow the million dollars from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,<sup>4/</sup> immediately requested the Board to recommend that the United States Treasury issue the necessary license permitting the transfer as specified by Sternbuch.<sup>5/</sup> A special meeting of the members of the Board was called to consider the matter. The Board unanimously decided that under no circumstances would it authorize the payment of ransom which payment of the sum to Musy might involve.<sup>6/</sup> However, since the mere presence of the money in Switzerland might serve to continue the negotiations, the Board agreed to recommend that the Treasury issue a license permitting the payment to a joint account in the names of Sternbuch and the Board's representative in Bern, Roswell D. McClelland, and providing that no payments be permitted from the account except as authorized by the Board.<sup>7/</sup> The Treasury issued such a license and the transfer was made in early March 1945. The fund was kept intact for the remainder of the war except for a

- 1/ Cable No. 1069 from Bern dated February 17, 1945, comprising document 265.
- 2/ Final Report from Board Representative McClelland to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated July 31, 1945.
- 3/ Cable No. 424 to Bern dated January 25, 1945, comprising document 266, Cable No. 605 from Bern dated January 28, 1945, comprising document 267, Cable No. 881 from Bern dated February 8, 1945, comprising document 268, and Cable No. 1069 from Bern dated February 17, 1945, comprising document 265.
- 4/ Letter from Joint Distribution Committee dated February 27, 1945.
- 5/ Letter from Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee dated February 12, 1945.
- 6/ Letter to Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee from Executive Director O'Dwyer dated February 28, 1945, comprising document 269.
- 7/ Cable No. 907 to Bern dated March 2, 1945, comprising document 270.



small payment authorized for relief supplies and the maintenance of refugees.1/ The unexpended balance of this fund was returned after hostilities ceased to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.2/

Negotiations with Germans in Sweden. Various German proposals concerning the Jews came through Sweden commencing in July 1944. The first approaches were indirect and informal and were made in discussions with the Board's Stockholm representative who participated with the knowledge and consent of the United States Minister, the Department of State and War, and the Board.3/ As in Switzerland these discussions in Sweden purposely were protracted for the sole purpose of gaining time for the Jews remaining in German hands.4/ The German offers at first contained specific ransom proposals and later shifted to humanitarian considerations, as was the case in the Swiss negotiations.5/ The talks in Sweden were conducted by Germans claiming to be close to Ribbentrop, Himmler and other high Nazi officials.6/ In March and April 1945 the presence of the German representatives in Sweden and their participation in special discussions leaked out to the press. This resulted in a series of rumors that German peace offers had been received in Sweden.7/ While the discussions were limited to the question of the treatment of Jews and prisoners of war in Nazi hands, the final German offers had clear marks of surrender feelers.8/ As a result of these talks in Sweden and contacts established by the Swedish section of the World Jewish Congress, a member of the Swedish Mosaic community flew to Berlin for a meeting with Himmler on April 21, 1945, to discuss the Jewish question.9/

- 1/ Cable No. 1149 to Bern dated March 21, 1945, comprising document 271, and Cable No. 1905 from Bern dated March 31, 1945, comprising document 272.
- 2/ Cable No. 2402 to Bern dated July 27, 1945, comprising document 273.
- 3/ Cable No. 2362 from Stockholm dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 274, and Cable No. 2419 from Stockholm dated July 3, 1944, comprising document 275.
- 4/ Final Report of Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated June 15, 1945.
- 5/ Cable No. 1365 to Stockholm dated July 10, 1944, comprising document 276; Cable No. 2621 from Stockholm dated July 15, 1944, comprising document 277; Cable No. 3565 from Stockholm dated September 11, 1944, comprising document 278; and Cable No. 4187 from Stockholm dated October 14, 1944, comprising document 279.
- 6/ Cable No. 876 from Stockholm dated March 7, 1945, comprising document 280 and Cable No. 1186 from Stockholm dated March 28, 1945, comprising document 281.
- 7/ Final Report of Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated June 15, 1945.
- 8/ Cable No. 646 to Stockholm dated April 7, 1945, comprising document 282, and Final Report of Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated June 15, 1945.
- 9/ Cable No. 1547 from Stockholm dated April 25, 1945, comprising document 283.

In reporting this incident the Board's Stockholm representative commented:

"Himmler arrived at the meeting at 2:30 a.m. on April 21, having just driven 80 km. from Hitler's birthday party. Probably no more bizarre scene could be staged to record Himmler's unconditional surrender to world opinion — a two hour drive through wrecked German roads and a conference until dawn with a Jew from Stockholm." 1/

Immediately following this meeting, a few thousand Jewish internees were released from the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck, Germany, and transported to Sweden by the Swedish Red Cross.<sup>2/</sup> This was another last-minute gesture on the part of German officials who hoped to gain more favorable treatment for themselves from the Allies.

1/ Final Report of Board Representative Olsen to Executive Director O'Dwyer dated June 15, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 1669 from Stockholm dated May 3, 1945.

II N - 1. RESCUE PROGRAMS: EMERGENCY REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENT

NORTH AFRICA

According to a report from Algiers early in 1944, the refugee problem in French North Africa began as far back as 1939, when thousands of Spanish Republicans fled across the border from Spanish Morocco. By 1944 the policy of strict internment had been abandoned and most of these Spanish refugees had been incorporated, at least temporarily, into the economy of North Africa, working either for French industry or for the Allied armies. For the miscellaneous refugees who needed charitable assistance, there had been established in such centers as Algiers, Casablanca, Oran, and Tunis certain mutual aid societies under the auspices of an organization known as the Joint Commission for Political Prisoners and Refugees in French North Africa. These societies were receiving funds from the United States under Treasury licenses to help needy Spanish refugees.

There were also said to be some 5,000 stateless refugees in North Africa, the greatest part of whom were Jews of German or Austrian origin. Early in 1944 a group of about 125 of these persons had been sent to Palestine through the efforts of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The small number of unemployable persons in this stateless group were being maintained through funds made available by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

By and large, the French Committee of National Liberation had neither encouraged nor discouraged the entrance of displaced persons into French North Africa but rather had put the whole question on an individual case basis, the real decisions being made jointly by United States, British, and French military security officers.<sup>1/</sup>

In addition to these stateless persons and the many non-French refugees who constituted the "refugee problem" of French North-Africa, thousands of French refugees, mostly of military age, had

<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 122 from Algiers dated February 22, 1944.

been enabled to reach North Africa through the efforts of the United States Embassy in Madrid and with the tacit consent of the Spanish and Portuguese Governments. Once in North Africa, many of these refugees were able to take up arms again against the Axis.1/

Board Representatives in North Africa. Leonard Ackermann was appointed to represent the Board in North Africa; he was later named Special Representative for the entire Mediterranean area.2/ During Representative Ackermann's absence in Italy, James Saxon represented the Board in Algiers in addition to his duties as United States Treasury representative.3/

CAMP LYAUTEY AT FEDHALA. In the summer of 1943, following an agreement reached between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, the Governments of the United States and Great Britain began negotiations with the French Committee of National Liberation looking toward the establishment of a temporary refuge in French North Africa for certain refugees of enemy or stateless nationality then in Spain as well as others who might be able to escape from Axis territory into Spain. The establishment of such a camp was at first strongly opposed by the French but was finally consented to on condition that the United States and the United Kingdom assume all financial responsibility, guarantee postwar repatriation or evacuation, and restrict the number of occupants to a maximum of 2,000 at any one time. The United States Army made available a campsite at Fedhala near Casablanca for the proposed haven. Responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this camp, which became known as Camp Marechal Lyautey, was to be vested in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, with this Government in charge of assembling and transporting the refugees in Spain to the port of embarkation and the British assuming responsibility for transporting the refugees to North Africa.4/ Pending the formal and long delayed transfer of the management of Camp Lyautey to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, however, the camp was operated by a staff belonging to and paid by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration but loaned to the Foreign Economic Administration.

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1/ See Rescue to and through Spain.

2/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

3/ Cable No. 1759 to Algiers dated June 3, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 61 to Casablanca from the State Department dated April 20, 1944, comprising document 234.



An informal understanding was subsequently reached between the Board and the Foreign Economic Administration to the effect that the latter would pay this Government's share of the transportation expenses of the initial group of refugees to be transferred to North Africa. An allocation from the President's Emergency Fund covering among other things certain transportation expenses from Spain to North Africa had been made to the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations, the functions and allocations which were later assumed by the Foreign Economic Administration.

Lyautey was to be a temporary camp; the responsibility for finding a more permanent place for the refugees accepted was to rest with the Intergovernmental Committee. It was also anticipated that some permanent emigration of the refugees would be arranged or that they would be moved for the duration of the war to a more permanent place, to be returned thereafter to the countries of their origin in Europe.1/

While the French had imposed certain restrictions upon the conduct of these refugees during their stay in French North Africa which did not meet with the entire accord of the British and United States Governments, these restrictions were accepted because of the overwhelming necessity for eliminating all obstacles to the entrance of further refugees into Spain from occupied areas. Regardless of the conditions that might be imposed upon refugees evacuated to North Africa, the Board considered immediate evacuation to Lyautey to be a matter of high policy based upon humanitarian considerations, the most important of which was to obtain the release of additional refugees from occupied territories. The fact that some of the refugees then in Spain might prefer to remain there because they felt that they might have less liberty in French North Africa or that some of them preferred to remain either through purely personal preference or predilections of obtaining entry elsewhere was, the Board felt, of strictly secondary importance when viewed in the light that the continued stay of refugees then in Spain might not only prejudice their own futures, but might also prejudice the actual lives and safety of other persons in occupied areas.2/

Security Screening Speeded. French representatives in Madrid charged with the security screening of these refugees had set up a cumbersome procedure for checking applicants. This procedure not only threatened to delay evacuation indefinitely but was contrary to a previous understanding between the French and the Allies.

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1/ Cable No. 1330 to London dated February 22, 1944, comprising document 285.

2/ See also Rescue to and through Spain.

Moreover, it appeared that the French in their screening process were demonstrating a reluctance to accept refugees who, because of their age, sex, or for other reasons, were felt to be less likely to leave the camp after the cessation of hostilities than would other types of refugees.

In the interest of speeding up these evacuations, Ambassador Hayes in Madrid requested the United States Mission in Algiers to ask that United States, British, and French authorities forego all but the most preliminary screening until the refugees reached North Africa.<sup>1/</sup> Refugees rejected from a security standpoint would thus be in United Nations' hands, rather than still free in neutral territory.

Meanwhile, Board Representative Ackermann and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration representative successfully prevailed upon French authorities to modify their screening requirements to coincide with the original understanding. The French gave assurance that the names of refugees forwarded to Algiers would be cleared within four days.<sup>2/</sup>

Cooperation of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Sought. At the request of the Board, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration cabled Moses Beckelman, its North African representative, instructing him to cooperate in speeding up the projected evacuations from Spain to Camp Lyautey. It declined, however, to instruct him to suggest or urge emigration, insisting that its international character made such action impolitic.

French Cooperation Enlisted. In order to enlist the full cooperation of the French Committee of National Liberation in connection with evacuations to Camp Lyautey, the matter was taken up by Board representatives in Washington with Jean Monnet of the French Committee. The various problems involved, including those of security, delays attendant upon existing procedures, and the necessity for general cooperation, were discussed and Monnet agreed to cable Algiers recommending fuller cooperation.<sup>3/</sup>

French authorities in North Africa had meanwhile raised objections to some 160 stateless persons applying for admission to Lyautey on the ground that they were not refugees, having

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 548 from Madrid dated February 16, 1944.  
<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 643 from Algiers dated February 28, 1944.  
<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 919 to Algiers dated March 27, 1944.

gone to Spain prior to 1933.<sup>1/</sup> While the Board hoped that all stateless persons could be removed from Spain as quickly as possible, Board Representative Ackermann was authorized to use his own judgment in determining whether or not this matter should be pressed further, especially inasmuch as the French had already made some concessions in their policy regarding admissibility to Lyautey as a result of Board representations.<sup>2/</sup>

The French were subsequently persuaded to drop their objections to refugees then in concentration camps or prisons in Spain, thereby reducing to 107 the number to whom objection was made. With respect to this group, Board Representative Ackermann and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration representative decided to press only for the admission of other genuine hardship cases.<sup>3/</sup>

Reversal of Discriminatory Ruling on Sephardics Obtained. In April 1944 the Board learned that the French were refusing to clear for admission to Camp Lyautey a number of Sephardic Jews who had arrived in Spain after March 1, 1944. On the basis of the reported ruling, 50 such refugees then in Perpignan, France, awaiting admission into Spain, as well as others still en route, would be excluded, since the Spanish Government would do nothing to rescue Sephardics unless it was assured that they would be removed from Spain soon after arrival. Board Representative Ackermann in Algiers was asked to investigate this report; in the event it proved to be correct, he was instructed to take up at once with French representatives the matter of obtaining a reversal of the ruling.<sup>4/</sup>

Board Representative Ackermann subsequently obtained confirmation of the Board's understanding with the French that so long as the total number of refugees in Camp Lyautey did not at any one time exceed 2,000, the French would not object to the entry of refugees merely because they arrived in Spain after March 1, 1944.<sup>5/</sup>

Lyautey Reserved for Refugees from Spain. Information reaching the Board early in May 1944 indicated that Allied military authorities were considering the possibility of asking the French to admit to North Africa for internment at Camp Lyautey some 750 Jewish refugees then in Italy. The Board at once communicated to Algiers its conviction that the Lyautey quota should not be filled

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- <sup>1/</sup> Cables No. 876 and 1062 from Algiers dated March 17 and April 1, 1944.
  - <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1092 to Algiers dated April 12, 1944.
  - <sup>3/</sup> Report from Board Representative Ackermann dated April 20, 1944.
  - <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 1253 to Algiers dated April 25, 1944, comprising document 286.
  - <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 1453 from Algiers dated May 3, 1944, comprising document 287.

by bringing Jews there from Italy, since bringing more refugees from Spain put the Board in a position to encourage the reception by Spain of more refugees from occupied territory. Other havens for the refugees in Southern Italy were being actively explored.1/

Evacuation Accomplished. An initial group of about 35 refugees reached Camp Lyautey from Spain in May 1944.2/

Following a series of delays in obtaining transportation, Board Representative Ackermann informed the Board that a French ship was definitely scheduled to reach Spain on June 20, 1944, for the purpose of evacuating a large group of refugees destined for Camp Lyautey. In addition to the assistance of the War Shipping Administration representative successfully enlisted by Board Representative Ackermann following the cancellation of an earlier date on which a British ship had been scheduled to sail, Ambassador Murphy had taken up the matter with the Commander of Naval Forces in the Mediterranean Area, pointing out the unfortunate results of any further delay. Ambassador Murphy indicated that the ship would proceed as scheduled unless extremely urgent operational requirements interfered.3/

Ambassador Hayes meanwhile advised Board Representative Ackermann that David Blickenstaff was proceeding with arrangements necessary in order to embark this group of refugees at Cadiz on the date specified.4/

A group of 573 stateless refugees destined for Camp Lyautey finally embarked from Cadiz on June 21, 1944, for North Africa, where transportation to Camp Lyautey awaited them.5/

As a result of arrangements made by the Board with the Foreign Economic Administration, the payment of port dues in Spain in connection with this sailing was made by the representative in Madrid of the United States Commercial Company, which was later reimbursed by the Board.

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- 1/ Cable No. 1423 to Algiers dated May 11, 1944, comprising document 288.
  - 2/ Cable No. 138 from Casablanca dated May 16, 1944.
  - 3/ Cables No. 1914 and 1935 from Algiers dated June 9 and June 10, 1944.
  - 4/ Cable No. 2053 from Madrid dated June 9, 1944.
  - 5/ Cable No. 2172 from Madrid dated June 22, 1944, comprising document 289.



Proposal To Close Camp Lyautey Opposed. Through Ambassador

Winant and Sir Herbert Emerson of the Intergovernmental Committee, the Board was advised of a suggestion made in July 1944 by the local management of Camp Lyautey that the camp, which then held 600 persons, be closed. It was further proposed that interned Sephardics be removed to a camp in Palestine and that the remaining inmates be distributed elsewhere. It was the local management's impression that the improving international situation left no more large contingents of refugees to be expected. The Intergovernmental Committee had replied that while the question of the future of the camp was one primarily for the United States and British Governments in consultation with French authorities, its own feeling was that any decision to close the camp at that time would be premature.1/

The Board indicated to Ambassador Winant its full agreement with the Intergovernmental Committee position. Such a suggestion at that time was, in fact, difficult to understand, in view of the necessity for caring for increasing numbers of refugees escaping from enemy territory and in view of decisions to expand existing refugee facilities in the Middle East and to open new camps in French North Africa, Tripolitania, and at Fort Ontario in this country.2/

United States Position Communicated to the British. With the agreement of the Department of State and the Foreign Economic Administration, the Board later asked that Ambassador Winant also make known to the British the view of this Government that it would be highly inopportune to close Camp Lyautey. The Board felt that such action, at a time when the British and this Government had under consideration the Hungarian proposal to permit thousands of Jews to emigrate from Hungary,3/ might well prove tragic in its consequences, for in the eyes of the Hungarian Government it might easily throw open to question the sincerity of the professed willingness of the British and United States Governments to receive on United Nations' territory Jews and other victims of enemy oppression. Furthermore, in view of these promises, the Board felt that all possible havens should be held available for any eventualities.4/

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1/ Cable No. 5637 from London dated July 17, 1944, comprising document 290; see also Cable No. 6289 from London dated August 5, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 5723 to London dated July 21, 1944.

3/ See Rescue from Hungary.

4/ Cable No. 7017 to London dated August 31, 1944, comprising document 291.

The British Foreign Office subsequently indicated its full agreement with the Board's position in this matter. 1/

According to information received by the Board about that time, there were some 650 persons at Camp Lyautey, including 400 Sephardics and 150 persons of other nationalities, the remainder being stateless persons. In addition, there was a newly arrived contingent of 150 British subjects who were being repatriated from Spain to Malta and Tripolitania and who were temporarily accommodated at Camp Lyautey. 2/

Refuge Sought for Holders of Latin American Documents. Information reaching the Board several months later indicated that efforts were still being made by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration representative at Camp Lyautey to have the camp closed. Certain German-American exchange arrangements being attempted at that time which included holders of Latin American documents made it even more urgent that the facilities of Camp Lyautey be held open for any such persons who might succeed in getting out of enemy territory. 3/ The Board therefore advised the United States Embassy in Paris of this possibility, emphasizing that there was no other destination available for these people, who, it was hoped, would be released into Switzerland and transported from there, either directly from France or by way of France and Spain, to the North African camp as transportation could be arranged.

The Board asked that the matter be taken up with the Provisional Government of France for the purpose of obtaining the latter's consent in principle to the admittance into French territory from Switzerland of any persons included in such a movement, as well as approval of their travel to a point of exit on the Spanish frontier, to Marseilles, or to any other port that might be designated, and of their eventual entrance into North Africa.

The Board also had the matter taken up with Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces to obtain its agreement in principle to the movements contemplated. 4/

Camp Lyautey Closed. Despite the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee and the Board, however, Camp Lyautey was eventually closed by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, its inmates being transferred to the camp at Philippeville. 5/

1/ Cable No. 7395 from London dated September 8, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 775 from Allied Force Headquarters in the Mediterranean Theatre dated September 22, 1944.

3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

4/ Cable No. 438 to Paris dated November 15, 1944, comprising document 292.

5/ See below.

PHILIPPEVILLE. In response to a proposal made by the Board through Ambassador Murphy in Algiers, a reply was received from French authorities in July 1944 accepting in principle the suggestion that a refugee camp be established near Philippeville in Algeria. The French suggested that a commission be set up, composed of representatives of the Inter-Allied General Staff and of the French Committee and eventually including a representative of the Yugoslav Government, to establish rules and regulations for the administration of such a refugee center and to coordinate Allied and French efforts. 1/

This camp was subsequently established and provisions were made by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for the reception and care of a maximum of 2,500 persons.

Early in 1945 a group of 140 "ad hoc" Latin American passport holders who had been released from the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen as the result of Board efforts and included in a German-American diplomatic exchange effected in Switzerland, were enabled to proceed to the camp at Philippeville, where the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration assumed responsibility for their maintenance. 2/

Preliminary arrangements also were made in early 1945 for the transfer to Philippeville of a group of 1,672 evacuees who had reached Switzerland from the German concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. In this connection the Board was advised that arrangements could be made at Philippeville for the accommodation of from 7,000 to 8,000 refugees by using tents in addition to the existing barracks. Medical facilities were available for 600 patients and could be doubled in case of an emergency. 3/ The proposed transfer of these refugees to Philippeville was never effected, however, pressure for their removal from Switzerland having abated. 4/

TRIPOLITANIA AND CYRENAICA. One of the specific recommendations made at the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 was that the British Government consider the question of admitting refugees to Cyrenaica. In July 1943, at the time President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill reached a general agreement concerning the desirability of establishing a refugee camp in North Africa, President Roosevelt had expressed a definite interest in the possibility of establishing temporary havens both in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Despite this long standing interest, no action

1/ Cable No. 2371 from Algiers dated July 12, 1944, comprising document 293.

2/ Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

3/ Letter from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration dated March 3, 1945.

4/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

was obtained from the British on the matter until after steps had been taken by President Roosevelt to set up an Emergency Refugee Shelter in this country. 1/

In a letter to the State Department under date of March 2, 1944, the Board recommended that a definite proposal be made at once to the British. Once an agreement had been concluded with the British, it was pointed out, the matter could then be cleared with the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff.

In a cable cleared with the State Department three weeks later, Ambassador Winant was asked to reopen the matter at once with the British, advising them that this Government was prepared to share with it the responsibility for financing, establishing, and maintaining such camps, including the cost of transferring refugees there, as in the case of Camp Lyautey in North Africa. 2/

Despite an approach made by Ambassador Winant along these lines, followed by repeated representations, no real response was obtained until June 1944, when the British finally consented to the joint establishment of a camp in Tripolitania. Such a camp, it was thought, would be able to accommodate between 1,000 and 1,500 people. On the matter of setting up a temporary haven in Cyrenaica, however, the British confidentially indicated that such acute political problems were involved that the establishment of a center there would be absolutely impossible. 3/

With regard to the camp in Tripolitania, the Board suggested that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration be asked to administer the camp, as in the case of Camp Lyautey. 4/

Neither of these proposed camps was actually established.

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- 1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.  
2/ Cable No. 2292 to London dated March 25, 1944, comprising document 294.  
3/ Cable No. 4556 from London dated June 7, 1944.  
4/ Cable No. 4753 to London dated June 15, 1944, comprising document 295.



## II N - 2. RESCUE PROGRAMS: EMERGENCY REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENT

### THE UNITED STATES

Beginning in early April 1944, when the matter of "free port" for refugees was first publicly proposed by newspaper columnist Samuel Grafton, there were numerous indications that the establishment in this country of temporary havens for war refugees would meet with a favorable public response. Resolutions or statements in support of temporary havens were adopted by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association, the American Friends Service Committee, the Catholic Committee for Refugees, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the National Farmers' Union, the Workers Delegation of the International Labor Conference, and many other labor, farm, church, and civic groups.

Virgin Islands Refuge Urged. A memorandum dated March 30, 1944, was submitted to the Board by the World Jewish Congress, urging the temporary admission of European refugees to the Virgin Islands. This memorandum suggested that, following the appeal of President Roosevelt on March 24, 1944, to neutral countries to facilitate the admission of refugees from Nazi oppression into their territories, the time was opportune for a reconsideration of the contribution which the United States could make to a solution of the problem. It was pointed out that the appeal of the President would gain immensely in effectiveness if it were followed by such practical action, and that this example would undoubtedly encourage other countries in the Western Hemisphere to relax their immigration restrictions.

Other Appeals Received. Shortly thereafter a memorandum was received by the Board from the American Jewish Conference urging the establishment of refugee havens in this country.

An urgent appeal along the same lines, signed by former Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York and a committee of 71 other leading Americans, was addressed to the President of the United States and to the governments of all the other United Nations. This appeal, which was signed by the Governors of 18 States as well as by members of Congress, educators, clergymen, businessmen, labor leaders, and

authors, declared temporary havens for refugees in this country to be a "moral obligation." 1/ In addition, letters were received from scores of individuals warmly supporting the proposed havens.

Decision Made To Establish United States Haven. The Board itself after carefully weighing the many considerations involved, had come to the conclusion that the prompt transfer of refugees from such "gateway" countries as Italy, Turkey, and Spain, with their limited facilities, to temporary havens in this country and elsewhere would not only pave the way for the escape from enemy territory of additional thousands of intended victims of Nazi executioners, but that it would also demonstrate to the Germans and to the world at large that the policies and recommendations of this Government were being implemented by equally bold and concrete action.

In May 1944 these views were communicated to President Roosevelt in a memorandum from the Board members expressing the conviction that the establishment of a temporary haven in the United States and the announcement that this country would receive within its borders refugees from enemy oppression would do much to overcome the reluctance of other countries to encourage the entry of refugees and thereby remove one of the basic obstacles encountered by the Board in its rescue efforts. It was further pointed out that the refugee situation in Southern Italy had developed to the point where the refugees constituted a considerable burden to military authorities and hindered the escape to that area of additional refugees from German-occupied territories.

At a press and radio conference late in May 1944 President Roosevelt announced his general approval of the establishment of temporary havens for war refugees in this country and elsewhere. On June 8, 1944, acting on the Board's proposal, the President directed Ambassador Robert Murphy in Algiers to arrange for approximately 1,000 refugees in Southern Italy to be brought to this country to an Emergency Refugee Shelter set up at the unused Army camp of Fort Ontario, near Oswego, New York where they were to remain under appropriate security restrictions for the duration of the war. The arrangement provided for the refugees to be brought here outside of the regular immigration procedure, and it was contemplated that they would be returned to their homelands at the end of the war. 2/

On the same date the President addressed a memorandum to the Secretaries of War, Navy, and Interior, the Director of the Budget,

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1/ See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

2/ Cable No. 1823 to Algiers dated June 8, 1944, comprising document 296.

and the Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, charging the Board with over-all responsibility for the project and the War Relocation Authority with the actual administration of the Shelter. The War and Navy Departments had charge of transporting the refugees to the United States, and it was the further responsibility of the War Department to furnish and equip Fort Ontario, arrange for the transportation of the refugees from the port of arrival to the Shelter, and take the necessary security precautions. Pending the anticipated assumption by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration of the financial responsibilities involved, 1/ the Bureau of the Budget was directed to arrange for financing the project, using to the extent possible available funds of the War Department, the War Relocation Authority, the War Refugee Board, Congressional appropriations for foreign war relief, and if necessary, drawing upon the President's Emergency Fund. 2/

Presidential Action Subject of Message to Congress. On June 12, 1944, President Roosevelt addressed a message to the Congress explaining his action in establishing the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego. Recalling the concern repeatedly manifested by Congress in "the pitiful plight of the persecuted minorities in Europe" and re-asserting the Nation's abhorrence of the "unprovoked murder of innocent people simply because of race, religion or political creed," the message reviewed the efforts of this Government to alleviate the condition of persecuted peoples throughout enemy Europe and commended the "direct and forceful attack on the problem" made by the Board since its inception. The message then recited the dangers still threatening innocent minorities in Axis territory and continued: 3/

"Recently the facilities for the care of refugees in southern Italy have become so overtaxed that unless many refugees who have already escaped to that area and are arriving daily, particularly from the Balkan countries, can be promptly removed to havens of refuge elsewhere, the escape of refugees to that area from German occupied territory will be seriously impeded ..... In view of this most urgent situation it seemed indispensable that the United States in keeping with our heritage and our ideals of liberty and justice take immediate steps to share the responsibility for meeting the problem."

- 1/ The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was later found to be unable to assume responsibility for refugees in a country which had not been occupied by the enemy.
- 2/ Memorandum from the President dated June 8, 1944, comprising document 297.
- 3/ Message of the President to Congress dated June 12, 1944, comprising document 298.

The text of the President's message was relayed to key United States Missions in both Europe and Latin America, 1/ wide publicity subsequently being accorded the statement throughout Europe.

United States Missions Asked To Act. As a result of the President's action, the Board was in a stronger position than ever before to urge Allied and neutral countries to expand existing refugee facilities. Moreover, by opening the doors of this country to even a limited number of refugees, new hope was brought to all the oppressed peoples of Europe.

The Board, in asking Ambassador Winant in London to bring the President's action to the attention of the British Government, also requested that he explore with British authorities the possibilities of expanding existing refugee facilities in the Mediterranean and of finding new havens of refuge in that area. In similar cables to United States Missions in the neutral countries and in the Soviet Union the Board asked that it be made clear to the governments of these various countries that it was attempting to find havens of refuge for all persecuted peoples who could escape from German-controlled territory. 2/

Approval of President's Action Reflected in Press Coverage. Following the President's announcement a steady stream of congratulatory messages and telegrams poured in. News coverage and editorial comment were likewise commendatory. Editorials endorsing the President's move promptly appeared in the New York Times, the New York Herald-Tribune, the New York Post, the Baltimore Sun, the Washington Post, and the Washington Evening Star, among others. These were followed by favorable editorial comment in newspapers throughout the United States.

Propriety of Temporary Haven Questioned. Shortly after the President's decision to establish the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego, Attorney General Francis Biddle furnished for the Board's information copies of an exchange of correspondence between his office and Senator Robert Reynolds. On June 14, 1944, Senator Reynolds wrote the Attorney General inquiring "as to just what ground the President based his authority .....permitting refugees or anyone else to enter this country outside of our quotas or in violation of our present immigration statutes." 3/

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- 1/ Radio Bulletin of the Department of State dated June 12, 1944; see also Circular Cable to London, Moscow, Lisbon, Madrid, Stockholm, Bern, Ankara, Algiers, Cairo, and Naples dated June 15, 1944; repeated on June 19, 1944, as a Circular Airgram to the various Latin American republics.
- 2/ See Rescue to and through Italy.
- 3/ Letter to the Attorney General from Senator Robert Reynolds dated June 14, 1944, comprising document 299.



In response, the Attorney General pointed out that the arrangements made specifically provided that the 1,000 refugees to be brought to this country from Italy were not to be entered under the immigration laws and therefore obtained no rights to be a liberty in the United States or to remain here. A number of instances were cited to substantiate the propriety of temporarily detaining aliens in this country outside of the requirements of the immigration laws. The Attorney General's reply reiterated the fact that the particular group of persons involved were a burden to the Allied military forces in an active theatre of war and that military necessity required some temporary disposition of them. It was also pointed out that as an emergency matter these persons might be permitted to enter the United States under the immigration laws by waivers of documents by the Secretary of State and, if necessary, by waiver of grounds of inadmissibility by the Attorney General. It was believed more desirable, however, the reply concluded, not to apply the immigration laws, which create various rights and privileges, but to deal with this group as with the prisoners of war and other Axis nationals who are admitted to this country temporarily and detained here outside, but not in violation of, the immigration laws. 1/

Evacuation Completed. Meanwhile, according to newspaper reports from Bari, hundreds of refugees crowded the offices of the Allied Control Commission to register their desire to be included in the group that was to be evacuated to this country. By mid-July 1944 the Displaced Persons Subcommittee of the Allied Control Commission, in cooperation with Ambassador Murphy and Board Representative Ackermann, had completed the selection and processing of the applicants. A total of 983 persons subsequently left Italy aboard an Army transport, after medical inspection had been completed at a camp near Naples. 2/

The refugees reached Oswego, New York, in August 1944. There were 369 Yugoslavians, 237 Austrians, 146 Poles, 96 Germans, and 41 Czechoslovakians in the group, according to a survey made after their arrival at the Shelter showing the current or last-claimed citizenship of the 982 individuals. The remaining 93 persons indicated citizenship of Rumania, France, Turkey, Danzig, Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, Libya, Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Holland, and the Soviet Union. Some 436 of the 590 persons whose declared or last-claimed citizenship was Austrian, Polish, German, Czechoslovakian, Russian, French, Danzig, Rumanian, Hungarian, and Turkish were or considered themselves to be stateless. 3/

- 1/ Letter to Senator Robert Reynolds from the Attorney General dated June 23, 1944, comprising document 300.
- 2/ Cable No. 30 from Rome dated July 20, 1944. The number of refugees reaching the United States was 982, an infant having died on board ship.
- 3/ International Migration Service Study (Partial Report) dated April 9, 1945.

The ages of the refugees ranged from 3 weeks to 80 years. There were 559 women and children and 423 men, 351 of the latter being more than 40 years of age. Children of both sexes under 16 numbered 189. 1/ There were 125 families with children 17 years of age and under, totaling 454 persons, and 136 other families involving 300 individuals. 2/

Shelter Accommodations. The barracks at Fort Ontario were converted into apartments of one, two, and three rooms, and quarters were assigned according to family size. Dormitory space was arranged for single persons. A 50-bed hospital equipped by the Army was placed under the direction of a medical officer, and a clinic was established in which the greater part of the medical work was performed by physicians from among the refugees themselves.

A nursery school for about 30 children and an adult education program were later conducted at the Shelter. Arrangements were also made for more than 175 of the refugees of elementary and high school age to attend public and parochial schools in the city of Oswego. Private agencies, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were especially helpful in providing funds and facilities for recreation, vocational training, and rehabilitation. 3/ In addition to food, housing, and medical care, the refugees were provided by the War Relocation Authority with small monthly cash allowances for minimum clothing and other personal requirements.

Policy on Employment of Refugees. Almost immediately after the announcement of the establishment of the Shelter and even before the refugees reached this country, the Board began to receive offers of employment outside the Shelter for the refugees. Farmers in the vicinity of Oswego, local public officials, and agencies responsible for labor recruitment all indicated an urgent need for emergency help to help prevent spoilage of important food crops then ready for harvesting and processing. After careful consideration of these requests, the Board concluded that the refugees at Oswego should have the opportunity to assist voluntarily in the harvest emergency but that the refugees should return to the Shelter every night during such emergency employment. 4/ Thus during the fall of 1944, up to 35 refugees per day were engaged at prevailing wages in agricultural work in the vicinity of Oswego.

Security Restrictions Rigidly Interpreted. The provision specifying that the refugees would remain at the Shelter under appropriate security restrictions was rigidly interpreted, and a closely supervised pass system was devised to allow Shelter residents to make visits to Oswego of not more than six hours duration for shop-

1/ Letter from the War Relocation Authority dated October 24, 1944.

2/ War Relocation Authority Statistical Memorandum No. 1 dated August 2, 1944.

3/ Memorandum from the War Relocation Authority dated September 19, 1944.

4/ Letter to the War Relocation Authority dated September 12, 1944, comprising document 301.

ping, school attendance, and other purposes. In no case were residents permitted to go beyond the environs of Oswego or to be absent from the Shelter overnight except in cases of urgently required medical or hospital treatment not locally obtainable. Although by late 1944 some 40 persons at the Shelter had indicated their interest in volunteering for service with the United States Army, the War Department held that "it would be incompatible with the conditions under which these aliens have been given refugee shelter in this country to permit any of them, otherwise eligible, to enter the Armed Forces of the United States." 1/

Terminal Recommendations Made with Respect to Oswego. After a thorough study of conditions at the Shelter and of the problems involved in the residents' ultimate settlement, Executive Director O'Dwyer in June 1945 presented three significant recommendations to the members of the Board. 2/ It was proposed, first, that "until such time as the United States Government policy with respect to the more general United Nations problem of the ultimate resettlement of permanently displaced persons, including those at Oswego and elsewhere in the United States, is definitely determined, the refugees at Oswego be allowed to remain in the United States, except in those cases where they are willing and able to return to countries to which repatriation can be effected."

Sponsored Leave Program Proposed. A second recommendation made by the Executive Director was that "while the refugees at Oswego remain in this country pending solution of their ultimate resettlement, they should be allowed greater freedom, under a general program of sponsored leave consistent with the broad humanitarian ideals that motivated this Government in bringing these people to the United States and with the conditions of American freedom surrounding them."

The first requests for permission for various individuals to leave the Shelter at Oswego, for one reason or another, had reached the Board shortly after the arrival of the refugees in this country. Many of the refugees had close relatives living in the United States husbands, wives, parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and others related by blood or marriage. These Shelter residents wished to be reunited with their families, and the relatives were willing and eager to take them into their homes and care for them. Young people at the Shelter had expressed their desire to being or continue their college education while in the United States and others wanted to find employment to provide themselves with funds

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1/ Letter from Acting Secretary of War Patterson to the Secretary of the Interior dated December 9, 1944.

2/ Letter to the Secretary of the Treasury (and accompanying memorandum) dated June 6, 1945, comprising document 302; identical letters were sent on the same date to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War.

for the post-war adjustments they would have to make. From the standpoint of health, the trying experiences which many of the refugees had had before coming to this country and their dissatisfaction with continued inactivity and strict confinement to the Shelter area had combined to create tensions which threatened to result in nervous and physical breakdowns.

Although in February 1945 the Secretary of the Interior, on the recommendation of the War Relocation Authority, had suggested the initiation of a plan whereby refugees who wished to do so would be permitted to "reside in normal communities," 1/ the Attorney General had been opposed to any departure from the strict interpretation which had been made of the conditions under which the refugees at Oswego had been admitted to the United States. 2/

Over-all Responsibility Transferred. A third recommendation made by the Executive Director was that, in view of the anticipated early termination of the War Refugee Board, "over-all responsibility for the Oswego project should be transferred immediately from the War Refugee Board to the Department of the Interior, which has the actual administration of the camp." This transfer was effected by President Truman as recommended, as of June 6, 1945. 3/ Action upon the two other recommendations concerning Oswego made by the Executive Director of the Board thus became subject to the discretion of the Department of the Interior.

At the time this transfer was effected, 14 of the refugees had left the United States, one person having emigrated to another country in March 1945 and a group of 13 Yugoslav nationals, the first of the Shelter residents to be repatriated, having sailed from the United States aboard the "S. S. Gripsholm" on May 31, 1945. The cost of effecting the return of these repatriates to Yugoslavia was borne by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

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- 1/ Letter from the Secretary of the Interior dated February 27, 1945, comprising document 303.
  - 2/ Letter from the Attorney General dated March 1, 1945, comprising document 304.
  - 3/ Memorandum from President Truman to the Secretary of the Interior and the Executive Director of the War Refugee Board dated June 6, 1945, comprising document 305,



## II N - 3. RESCUE PROGRAMS: EMERGENCY REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENT

### OTHER COUNTRIES

The Middle East. A report received by the Board in June 1944 from the chief of the Balkan Mission of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration reviewed in detail refugee conditions in the Middle East. According to this report, in January 1944 the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration, a British organization functioning in that area prior to the operation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, was asked to accept responsibility for some 20,000 Yugoslav refugees. The Egyptian Government agreed to make accommodations available in Egypt, while a staff, supplies, and services were made available by the British Army. A total of 26,000 refugees had actually arrived in Egypt by June, 1944. While camp space and supplies were said to have caused no difficulties, obtaining transportation facilities and an adequate medical staff were serious problems.

In May 1944, the report continued, the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration had been asked to assume responsibility for a total of up to 40,000 refugees. Since this organization was scheduled to be taken over by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, it became necessary to get the approval of the latter from Washington. This approval was subsequently obtained on condition that the military authorities make available the necessary administrative and medical staff, supplies, and other services. Although the military had hoped to be able to do this, it developed that the actual shortage of doctors was so great that a sufficient staff could not be released.<sup>1/</sup>

Board Acts To Obtain Needed Medical Personnel. Reports from Board Representative Ackermann had likewise repeatedly warned of the shortage of medical personnel for camps in the Middle East. This shortage threatened not only seriously to reduce the absorptive capacity of camps already in operation but also threatened to

<sup>1/</sup> Airgram No. A-21 from Cairo dated June 6, 1944, comprising document 306.

prevent the establishment of new refugee centers that had been contemplated. It was feared that this might in turn prevent the movement of refugees from Italy and elsewhere. Moreover, it was felt that failure to meet this need might even result in the unwillingness of military authorities to receive additional refugees in Italy itself.1/

Since the Board felt that as many refugees as possible should be moved to the Middle East, discussions were held with United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration representatives as well as with Army authorities on the problem of obtaining sufficient medical and nursing personnel and necessary supplies and transportation facilities.

The Board also sent word of this situation to the National Committee for Resettlement of Foreign Physicians, an American organization concerned with the problems of professional adjustment of the estimated 6,500 refugee physicians who had come to this country in the past decade. It developed that the Committee, faced both with difficulties of immediate adjustment and with anticipated post-war problems of the emigre physician, was just completing a detailed study of the composition of a group of 4,143 physicians and dentists registered with it. This study contained details as to age, sex, length of residence in the United States, citizenship status, country of graduation from medical school, fields of medicine, United States licensure, and current occupations. The results of this study were made available to the Civil Affairs Division of the United States Army, and a meeting was arranged between representatives of the Committee and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration with a view to recruitment of medical personnel for the camps in question.

Possibility of Using Cyprus as Temporary Haven Explored. In June 1944, upon learning of the vacancy of a company village belonging to the Cyprus Mining Corporation on the British island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean, the Board asked Ambassador Winant in London to investigate fully the possibility of temporarily caring for refugees there.2/ It was estimated that this village, which had been occupied by the British Army for three years, could accommodate about 1,500 families. A number of staff houses were also reported to be available.

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1/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

2/ Cable No. 4641 to London dated June 12, 1944, comprising document 123.

In response to Ambassador Winant's representations, however, the head of the Refugee Department in the British Foreign Office asserted that, in view of the large number of refugee Greeks who had already fled to Cyprus, it would be absolutely impossible to use Cyprus as a haven for any additional refugees.1/

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1/ Cable No. 4745 from London dated June 14, 1944, comprising document 307.

## II N - 4. RESCUE PROGRAMS: EMERGENCY REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENT

### PALESTINE

One temporary haven to which hundreds of Jewish refugees escaped during the war was Palestine. The Board's sole interest in Palestine throughout lay simply in the question as to what extent such refugees could be brought into Palestine, even if only for temporary refuge. From the Board's standpoint, enabling threatened Jews to reach Palestine and placing them in camps, to be returned to their homelands at the end of the war, was just as effective as admitting them to Palestine on a permanent basis. The Board therefore from the outset neither supported nor opposed the establishment of a Jewish national state in Palestine.<sup>1/</sup>

Board Position on Permanent Resettlement. The Board's position on the Palestine issue was more or less a corollary to its position on the entire matter of permanent resettlement. Inasmuch as the Executive Order establishing the Board gave the Board no jurisdiction over the problems of permanently resettling victims of the Axis who might be enabled to escape to neutral or United Nations' territory, other than that it should "cooperate with all existing and future international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement," the Board's activities proceeded on the assumption that concern with matters relating to permanent resettlement was not properly within its jurisdiction.

<sup>1/</sup> In March 1919, sixteen months after the issuance by the British Secretary of State on Foreign Affairs of "the Balfour Declaration," promising to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, President Wilson had stated that the people and Government of the United States likewise approved the foundation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. A joint Congressional resolution in 1922 had reiterated the interest of this Government in "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people . . . ."



British White Paper Limited Immigration. In May 1939 the British Parliament had approved what was to become known as the British White Paper on Palestine, declaring that it was not the policy of the British Government that Palestine should become a Jewish state; such a policy, it was asserted, would be contrary to Britain's obligations to the Arabs under the League of Nations' Mandate.<sup>1/</sup> The British White Paper provided specifically that after the admission of 75,000 Jewish immigrants over a period of five years, no further Jewish immigration would be permitted "unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it." The five-year period referred to in the White Paper expired in April 1944.

Endangered Persons Permitted Entry within Limits. Since war conditions had disrupted ordinary immigration as well as transportation facilities in general, the Board in early 1944 asked Ambassador Winant for information as to the extent of the unused balance of the original quota of 75,000 Jewish immigrants fixed by the White Paper. Inquiry was also made as to whether or not this balance might be used to provide temporary havens for Jews whom it might be possible to rescue from enemy territory.

Ambassador Winant replied that as of March 1944, the unused balance of the original White Paper quota amounted to approximately 26,000. With respect to this balance, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had indicated that immigrants unable to reach Palestine by April 1944 would not be excluded by the time feature and that no effort would be lacking "on the part of His Majesty's Government to facilitate their arrival subject to the criterion of economic absorptive capacity."<sup>2/</sup>

Thus throughout the life of the Board several thousand refugees were enabled to proceed to Palestine, notably from Hungary and the Balkans through Turkey. Since it had become virtually impossible for Jews in hiding in enemy territory to apply for exit permits or

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<sup>1/</sup> Under the League of Nations' Mandate over Palestine, adopted in September 1923, Great Britain as the Mandatory assumed responsibility for putting into effect the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration read: "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country."

<sup>2/</sup> Dispatch No. 14393 from London to the State Department dated March 11, 1944, enclosing letter from the British Foreign Office to the United States Embassy in London dated February 18, 1944, both comprising document 58.

Palestine Certificates, the British were prevailed upon to guarantee that Palestine Certificates would be made available for all Jewish refugees reaching Turkish soil.1/

Following the announcement by President Roosevelt of his decision to establish an Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego, New York, for refugees who threatened to impede the escape route through Italy, negotiations were begun with the British on the possibility of removing refugee Jews from Italy to Palestine.2/ With the help of private agencies, many Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula and from Italy were meanwhile gradually removed to Palestine. In one instance, 571 Jewish immigrants previously confined in Italy in camps at Ferramonte, Santa Maria, and Bari, reached Palestine aboard the Polish steamer "Batori."3/

New Restrictions on Palestine Immigration Reported. Toward the end of 1944 Board Representative Katzki indicated that Jewish Agency representatives in Istanbul had received instructions from Jerusalem and from the Istanbul British Passport Control Office that immigration to Palestine for a period of six months from October 1, 1944, was to be limited to 10,300. Since the allocation of these certificates was to be limited to Bulgaria, Rumania, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Yemen, and Turkey and since the new schedule made no mention of Jews in Hungary, Slovakia, or other areas still under Nazi control, the Jewish Agency in Istanbul had requested clarification from Jerusalem as to whether these quota limitations applied only to liberated areas, with unlimited immigration still to be permitted from occupied countries to Palestine. Board Representative Katzki pointed out that, if the answer were in the negative, the entire mechanism for the protection and evacuation of Jews still in occupied areas, which was predicated to a very great extent on their possession of Palestine certificates or confirmations, would be jeopardized as soon as the new limitations became known to the Nazis. There were, in fact, several groups of refugees with which the Board had been concerned who had already been furnished with Palestine certificates or otherwise promised entry into Palestine, who were at that time awaiting exit permits. If Palestine were to become unavailable for the reception of these and other refugees, new places of refuge would have to be sought immediately.4/

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1/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ See Rescue from Italy.

3/ Cable No. 77 from Jerusalem dated June 5, 1944, comprising document 308.

4/ Cable No. 2178 from Ankara dated November 13, 1944.

Word meanwhile received from London, however, indicated that the Foreign Office anticipated no policy change with respect to the Palestine situation.<sup>1/</sup> Board Representative Katzki was therefore advised that, while full clarification had not been obtained as to the significance of the new quotas reported by him, it was the Board's impression that the new allocations would not prevent the granting of Palestine certificates to persons in enemy-controlled territory.<sup>2/</sup>

Palestine Certificates Issued to Refugees in Switzerland.  
Following the arrival in Switzerland of approximately 1,355 refugees from Camp Bergen-Belsen in Germany in early December 1944,<sup>3/</sup> the Board asked Ambassador Winant and Board Representative Mann in London to take up with the British the question of the admission of this group to Palestine.<sup>4/</sup> Board Representative McClelland had been informed by the Chief of the Swiss Federal Police that the majority of these refugees were Hungarians; all held documents issued by the Hungarian Red Cross or an international Jewish organization, for the most part shortly before the German occupation of Hungary, stating that Palestine certificates in their names were available in Istanbul. It was stated that all of these refugees had originally intended to go to Palestine and that they had planned to pick up their certificates in Istanbul and then proceed to Haifa.

After obtaining from the British Legation in Bern particulars concerning this group and another group of some 320 refugees who had previously reached Switzerland from Bergen-Belsen, the British Foreign Office replied that the admissibility of these refugees into Palestine would have to be considered under the new quota limitations. The British went on to suggest that the steps already under way for the removal of the entire group from Switzerland to a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation camp in Italy or North Africa offered the best immediate solution of the problem.<sup>5/</sup> The Foreign Office also pointed out that some of the refugees involved probably would prove to be responsibilities of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and that under the arrangements made in the summer of 1944 in connection with the

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- <sup>1/</sup> Airgram No. A-1366 from London dated November 14, 1944.
  - <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1105 to Ankara dated November 29, 1944.
  - <sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.
  - <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 66 to London dated January 3, 1945.
  - <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 1870 from London dated February 23, 1945.

so-called Horthy offer 1/ the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees likewise had special responsibilities with respect to Hungarian Jews who escaped from enemy hands.

In May 1945, 700 Palestine certificates were authorized for refugees in Switzerland from Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, and plans were developed to have the certificate holders removed from Switzerland to Palestine via Italy in August 1945.2/

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1/ See Rescue from Hungary.

2/ Cable No. 3632 from Bern dated July 20, 1945, comprising document 309; see also Cables No. 2982 and 3560 from Bern dated June 1 and July 14, 1945.



## II C. 1. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

### RECOGNITION OF LATIN AMERICAN PASSPORTS

Following the outbreak of war in Europe the consulates of a number of Latin American countries began the practice of issuing passports or protective papers to Jews and other endangered persons in Germany and German-controlled territory, especially Poland, for purely humanitarian reasons and without regard for legal requirements. According to the Swiss Foreign Office, many of these papers were issued through the consulates of the various countries in Japan, Switzerland, Portugal, Sweden, the United States, and perhaps in Poland itself. There also was evidence that additional numbers of such protective documents were irregularly issued by persons seeking to save the lives of victims of Nazi oppression or to prevent their persecution at the hands of the Nazis.

In December, 1943, the State Department had been advised by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees that Paraguay, in particular, was reportedly threatening to revoke a number of passports which, though apparently issued illegally, constituted the sole protection of their holders against deportation to Poland. A strong cable from the State Department brought the statement from Paraguay that the passports in question would not be cancelled.

Early in 1944, however, the Board was advised by private sources that German authorities, apparently learning that some of these protective papers had been obtained by their bearers in an extraordinary manner, proceeded to take away the documents held by thousands of claimants to Latin American nationality who had been interned in the camps of Vittel, Liebenau, Compiègne, Tittmoning, Bergen-Belsen, Bergau, and perhaps elsewhere in German-controlled territory. Persons who held Salvadoran documents, in particular, were reportedly threatened with loss of the special treatment to which their documents had entitled them, and thus faced deportation and possible extermination.

Further investigation by the Board's representatives abroad revealed that Switzerland, the protecting power of El Salvador and of other Latin American interests in Germany, had taken no steps to

protest the action of the Germans with respect to such protective documents and had even begun to prosecute certain individuals in Switzerland who were suspected of having been instrumental in obtaining such passports.

Negotiations Begun with Latin American Governments. In view of these reports the Board on March 31, 1944, sent a circular airgram to the Latin American countries involved, asking the United States Missions there to approach the governments to which they were accredited in an endeavor to secure their agreement, on humanitarian grounds, to take no action until after the war to revoke, cancel, or otherwise impair the effectiveness of the passports and other documents held by persons in Germany and German-occupied territory.<sup>1/</sup> Protracted negotiations were subsequently carried on with each of these countries along the lines the Board proposed.<sup>2/</sup>

Initial Approach Made to Switzerland. Although the Board had been advised by the Intergovernmental Committee that Swiss authorities were opposed to any approach to the Germans for the purpose of inducing them to recognize these documents inasmuch as they felt that any such approach would be unsuccessful,<sup>3/</sup> the Board nevertheless cabled Bern, asking the United States Legation there to check on the Swiss attitude and to bring pressure upon that Government to take active steps toward inducing the Germans to give recognition to the documents in question. It was also requested that the Swiss Government abstain from prosecuting persons who had been instrumental in procuring these passports.<sup>4/</sup>

Following representations to the Swiss Foreign Office along these lines, the Board learned that Switzerland, in her role of protecting power, had requested instructions of the interested

<sup>1/</sup> Circular Airgram to Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela dated March 31, 1944, comprising document 310. Information later received from private sources indicated that passports and documents issued in the names of Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, and Uruguay were likewise involved. Accordingly, the Board's circular communication was repeated in substance to those countries on May 1, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> See below.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1708 from London dated March 2, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 1181 to Bern dated April 7, 1944, comprising document 311.

Latin American governments some time before, when bearers of expiring passports issued in the names of these respective countries had asked the Swiss Legation in Berlin to renew them. The Latin American governments in general had refused to authorize the extension of the passports, it was learned. While the Swiss indicated that they had refrained from bringing this fact to the attention of the Germans, Switzerland nevertheless had no authority to continue action through diplomatic channels to protect the persons involved.1/ The Board's proposals to the various Latin American governments thus became all the more urgent.

Passport Holders Removed from Camp Vittel. Meanwhile word was received to the effect that 238 Jews interned at Camp Vittel in France had on March 20, 1944, been isolated for deportation on the ground that the Latin American documents they held were only accommodation passports and their holders were thus not eligible for exchange.2/ Shortly thereafter Minister Harrison in Bern reported that these 238 internees, including four claiming United States citizenship, had been removed from Camp Vittel on March 31, 1944, to some unknown location.3/ Swiss representations to the German Foreign Office later elicited only the statement that none of the persons removed from Vittel had "proof" of their nationalities despite their claims; further information concerning these deportees was thus denied as an "internal" matter.4/ In the interim the Board was advised by a private source that these particular deportees had probably been placed in Camp Drancy near Paris. Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were therefore asked to take steps through the Swiss and through the International Red Cross to insure whatever protection was possible for these persons.5/

1/ Cable No. 3871 from Bern dated June 17, 1944, comprising document 312.

2/ Cable No. 1958 from Bern dated March 30, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1994 from Bern dated March 31, 1944, comprising document 313.

4/ Cable No. 4223 from Bern dated July 3, 1944, comprising document 314.

5/ Cable No. 1596 to Bern dated May 3, 1944.

Passport Holders Declared Eligible for Exchange. In view of the Vittel action and the possibility of even more drastic treatment, the Board concluded that the most effective means of safeguarding the lives of these and other holders of Latin American documents lay in convincing the Germans that they were eligible for exchange against German civilians interned in countries of the Western Hemisphere. The Board therefore cabled Minister Harrison its conviction that German doubts as to whether persons in this category were exchange material should be promptly and effectively dispelled. Minister Harrison also was asked to request the Swiss to use their good offices to inform the Germans of discussions which this Government was just then initiating with Latin American countries<sup>1/</sup> with a view to arranging such an exchange on a hemispheric basis. More specifically, the Board requested that it be made clear that this Government considered all internees who were at Vittel to be eligible for such exchange; the Germans were to be advised that in the meantime it was expected that the Vittel group would be returned and accorded the same treatment Germany expected her citizens to be accorded in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>2/</sup> Representations along these lines were promptly made by Minister Harrison.<sup>3/</sup>

Spanish Government Informed of Board's Interest. The Board also cabled the United States Embassy in Madrid, asking Ambassador Hayes to inform the Spanish Government of the vital interest of this Government in the return of the Vittel group and in safeguarding the lives of all persons in this category, as well as of the pending discussions with the Latin American countries with respect to the projected exchange.<sup>4/</sup>

The Spanish Foreign Office at first replied that since Switzerland was charged with the protection in Germany of North American interests, as well as of those of the majority of the South American republics, it would be advisable if the Board's request were directed to the Swiss Government, "thus avoiding any misinterpretation which might arise should the Spanish Government carry out the desired intervention."<sup>5/</sup>

1/ See below.

2/ Cable No. 1221 to Bern dated April 10, 1944, comprising document 315, and Cable No. 1270 to Bern dated April 13, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 2510 from Bern dated April 20, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 992 to Madrid dated April 10, 1944, comprising document 316.

5/ Dispatch No. 2459 from Madrid dated May 11, 1944.



After repeated urging on humanitarian grounds, as well as on the ground that the Vittel group may have contained persons holding documentation issued in the names of Bolivia and Paraguay, with whose interests in Germany Spain had been entrusted, Ambassador Hayes in Madrid was advised by the Spanish Foreign Office that instructions to make representations concerning the return of the Vittel group had been sent to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin.<sup>1/</sup> Instructions were later sent on several occasions to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin "to take with all possible speed and interest" necessary steps for the protection of Jews in general and to safeguard those holding Latin American passports, in particular.<sup>2/</sup>

Support Sought for Exchange Negotiations. On April 11, 1944, a circular airgram was dispatched to the United States Missions in the various Latin American countries asking that the governments of those countries be requested to give their approval to this Government's approach to the Germans through appropriate channels with a view to initiating exchange negotiations on a hemispheric basis. The Board also requested that these Latin American governments likewise approach the Germans through their protecting powers with the demand that all internees holding Latin American passports or consular documents be accorded the same treatment as that given to prisoners of war under the Geneva convention.<sup>3/</sup> A follow-up airgram along the same lines was sent on April 22, 1944.<sup>4/</sup>

On May 1, 1944, the various Latin American governments were advised that this Government did not expect such countries physically to admit any of these persons, but that arrangements would be

1/ Cable No. 2389 from Madrid dated July 10, 1944.

2/ See Rescue to and through Spain.

3/ Circular Airgram to Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela dated April 11, 1944, comprising document 317; repeated in substance on the same date to Paraguay and on May 1, 1944, to Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, and Uruguay. See also Relief Programs: Efforts To Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.

4/ Circular Airgram to Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, and Venezuela dated April 22, 1944; repeated in substance on the same date to Paraguay and on May 1, 1944, to Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, and Uruguay.

made for refuge elsewhere. United States Ambassadors were asked to impress upon the officials concerned the fact that failure to act would almost certainly spell death for the persons involved.1/

Report of Vatican Efforts Transmitted from Bern. Following his representations to the Swiss Foreign Office, Minister Harrison learned of certain independent efforts made by the Vatican to work out relief measures for Jews in enemy territory holding Latin American documents. The details of these efforts were transmitted to the Board under date of April 13, 1944.2/ The Board at once arranged to have communicated to Vatican City this Government's warm appreciation of the Holy See's action. At the same time the Vatican was asked to support, in Spain and in Latin America, the protective measures which had been initiated by the Board.3/ Such support was later furnished by the Holy See in the form of independent parallel actions.4/

Claims to United States Citizenship Provided Protection. Since certain individuals among the refugees interned in Germany and in German-controlled territory claimed United States citizenship, the Board on March 25, 1944, proposed to the State Department that Switzerland, as the protecting power of the United States, be advised that while such claims were under investigation and until the Swiss Government was advised to the contrary, this Government expected such persons to be treated as United States citizens, with all the rights, privileges, and immunities to which such citizens are entitled. The State Department agreed on April 13, 1944, to authorize this action,5/ and Switzerland was so advised by Minister Harrison. The Swiss were asked to extend protection, in particular, to the deportees from Vittel who claimed United States citizenship.6/

1/ Airgram No. A-151 to Managua dated May 1, 1944, comprising document 318; subsequently repeated in substance to the other Latin American countries.

2/ Cable No. 2282 from Bern dated April 13, 1944, comprising document 319.

3/ Cable No. 1502 to Bern dated April 29, 1944.

4/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated May 6, 1944, comprising document 320; see also Cable No. 294 from Naples dated June 28, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 1269 to Bern dated April 13, 1944, comprising document 321.

6/ Cable No. 2510 from Bern dated April 20, 1944.

In a circular communication to the various Latin American countries under date of May 11, 1944, United States Embassies there were advised of these instructions with respect to honoring claims to United States citizenship, since it was felt that knowledge of this action would be of value in connection with pressing for Latin American cooperation in the Board's humanitarian efforts.1/

PARALLEL ACTION TAKEN BY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. In the course of prolonged negotiations with other American republics, the Board eventually succeeded, on humanitarian grounds, in securing the consent of most of them to the protective measures proposed, including postponement of the examination of such documents and claims until such time as the persons in question should no longer be subject to enemy persecution, and support in the proposed German-American exchange. There follows a brief resume of these negotiations.

Bolivia. One of the reports received by the Board concerning efforts of the Vatican to work out relief measures for Jews holding Latin American documentation indicated that the Bolivian Government was agreeable to admitting to that country any such persons holding Bolivian documents. Following representations through the United States Embassy in Bolivia, the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June, 1944, formally confirmed its willingness to help safeguard the lives and aid in the proposed exchange of claimants to Latin American nationality.2/ Bolivian support, through Spain as the protecting power, was thus added to the representations already initiated.

Chile. United States representations concerning the protection and exchange of claimants to Latin American nationality were supported by the Chilean Government in both Madrid and Bern.3/

Costa Rica. According to information reaching the Board, some 36 persons among those interned at Camp Vittel claimed Costa Rican

1/ Circular Airgram to Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela dated May 11, 1944, comprising document 322; repeated in substance on June 2, 1944, to Bolivia.

2/ Airgram No. A-288 from La Paz dated June 26, 1944, comprising document 323.

3/ Cable No. 932 from Santiago dated May 30, 1944, comprising document 324; see also Dispatch No. 11230 from Santiago dated December 5, 1944.

nationality. In the course of representations to Costa Rica, a spokesman for the United States Embassy there called this report to the attention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although the Foreign Minister indicated that it had been his original intention to declare a number of Costa Rican passports invalid because of his conviction that many had been obtained as a result of "pecuniary cupidity" on the part of passport authorities, in May, 1944, the agreement of the Foreign Minister to cooperate along the lines the Board proposed was obtained in view of the humanitarian considerations involved.<sup>1/</sup> Costa Rican support was thus enlisted through Switzerland, as the protecting power of Costa Rica, with the United States Government serving as the channel through which the two governments communicated.

Cuba. According to the report of Vatican efforts from Bern, the Cuban Government had indicated that passports issued in her name to Jews in German-held territory would be recognized by Cuba if the United States and Great Britain had no objection. Ambassador Braden in Havana was therefore promptly instructed to convey to the Cuban authorities this Government's assurance that it had no objection to Cuban recognition of such documents.<sup>2/</sup> As a result of representations made by the Board through Ambassador Winant in London, <sup>3/</sup> a similar assurance was given Cuba by Great Britain.<sup>4/</sup>

The Cuban Ministry of State later, in accordance with Ambassador Braden's representations, instructed the Cuban Embassy in Madrid to make urgent representations in support of this Government's request through Spanish channels calling for the return of the refugees deported from Vittel.<sup>5/</sup>

As a result of further representations by Ambassador Braden, the Cuban Minister of State in June, 1944, agreed to supplement these original representations by directing the Cuban Embassy in

<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 1400 from San José dated May 16, 1944, comprising document 325.

<sup>2/</sup> Airgram No. A-738 to Havana dated May 3, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 3644 to London dated May 6, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 3982 from London dated May 17, 1944.

<sup>5/</sup> Airgram No. A-1071 from Havana dated May 19, 1944.



Madrid to request that Spain inform the Germans that Cuba would not permit the validity of any Cuban documents to be questioned by the Germans. Cuba also agreed to support the proposed exchange negotiations.1/

In August, 1944, the Board received a report from Bern concerning the plight of an individual born in Warsaw, Poland, who claimed Cuban nationality.2/ In view of the possibility that German authorities would consider him a stateless Polish Jew and condemn him to deportation and death, the United States Embassy in Havana was asked to endeavor to have the Cuban Foreign Office follow up its general support of passport negotiations with a specific request through Swiss channels that the individual in question, as well as any other persons similarly situated, be accorded treatment to which Cuban nationals were entitled.3/ The Cuban Foreign Office in turn authorized the United States Government to transmit such a request to Switzerland on behalf of Cuba.4/

Ecuador. The Ecuadoran Government, when approached by a representative of the United States Embassy there, indicated that it was not disposed to confirm the validity of unauthorized passports but agreed not to cancel such documents prior to the time their holders reached places of safety.5/

In May, 1944, the Board was advised that Ecuador was sending a telegram to the Germans, through the Swiss, requesting that the rights of persons claiming Ecuadoran nationality be safeguarded.6/ Inasmuch as no such instructions had been received by the Swiss Government by July, 1944, repeated representations were made in Ecuador toward getting such instructions sent to Switzerland.7/

1/ Airgram No. A-1294 from Havana dated June 16, 1944, comprising document 326.

2/ Cable No. 5281 from Bern dated August 14, 1944.

3/ Airgram No. A-1551 to Havana dated September 1, 1944.

4/ Airgram No. A-2095 from Havana dated September 19, 1944.

5/ Dispatch No. 1388 from Quito dated April 18, 1944, comprising document 327.

6/ Airgram No. A-245 from Quito dated May 6, 1944.

7/ Airgram No. A-339 to Quito dated July 14, 1944.

When these instructions finally reached Switzerland, Swiss authorities declared their terms to be contradictory and difficult to interpret and therefore took no steps toward extending Ecuadoran protection pending clarification of the instructions received.1/ As a result of further representations by the United States Embassy in Quito,2/ clarification was promptly cabled by Ecuador to its Consulate in Geneva.3/

In January, 1945, the Board was advised by a private source of the danger facing 147 persons interned at Bergen-Belsen, who held passports issued in the name of Ecuador, the validity of which had expired or was near expiration. The United States Embassy in Ecuador was therefore asked to transmit to Ecuadoran officials the urgent request of this Government that, to avoid a tragic loss of life, the Government of Ecuador extend the validity of the passports in question and advise the protecting power accordingly.4/ In response to this request, the Ecuadoran Government subsequently authorized the extension for one year of the validity of these passports on condition that all such documents be surrendered by their bearers and turned over to Ecuadoran authorities when their protective purpose had been served.5/

El Salvador. Following representations to the Salvadoran Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Thurston in April, 1944, was advised that a note had been addressed to the Spanish Minister to El Salvador (as the protecting power of German interests there), authorizing Salvadoran support in the proposed exchange negotiations with Germany and requesting protection in the interim for all persons holding passports issued in the name of El Salvador.6/ Shortly after this action was taken, however, the Salvadoran Foreign Office was completely reorganized. When Ambassador Thurston in May, 1944, again took up with the Foreign Office the matter of extending protection to bearers of Salvadoran documents, he was given the text of a note which had been addressed by the new Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Spanish Minister.7/ In this

1/ Cable No. 6469 from Bern dated September 29, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 813 to Quito dated October 13, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1015 from Quito dated October 20, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 65 to Quito dated January 24, 1945.

5/ Dispatch No. 2736 from Quito dated February 13, 1945.

6/ Airgram No. A-186 from San Salvador dated May 3, 1944, comprising document 328.

7/ Airgram No. A-237 from San Salvador dated June 7, 1944; see also Airgram No. A-204 to San Salvador dated June 29, 1944.

note, which was otherwise identical with the note previously dispatched, the words "persons who bear Salvadoran passports or who claim to hold Salvadoran citizenship" had been changed to read "persons who bear Salvadoran passports or who prove that they possess Salvadoran citizenship." Efforts to obtain a modification of these terms proved unsuccessful.

In a later discussion with the Spanish Minister, however, Ambassador Thurston was confidentially advised that the second request, because of its similarity to the first, had not been transmitted to Switzerland (the protecting power of Salvadoran interests in Germany).1/ The Swiss Government therefore proceeded under the more liberal terms of the first request.

Guatemala. Following representations by Ambassador Long, the Guatemalan Minister for Foreign Affairs in May, 1944, agreed to support the proposed exchange and to request that all persons in Axis territory holding Guatemalan documents or claiming Guatemalan nationality be accorded the fullest protection.2/

The Guatemalan Foreign Office subsequently enlisted the assistance of the United States in transmitting these requests to Switzerland, the Guatemalan protecting power.3/

Haiti. As a result of repeated representations, the Haitian Minister for Foreign Affairs in May, 1944, agreed to request the Germans to accord all persons holding Haitian passports the rights of Haitian nationals until such time as the Haitian Government should direct otherwise.4/ Before such a request was actually addressed to Switzerland as the Haitian protecting power, however, concern was expressed by the Haitian Minister over certain practical difficulties involved, since previous communications to Swiss authorities had stated that Haiti would not protect the holders of

1/ Airgram No. A-288 from San Salvador dated July 7, 1944, comprising document 329.

2/ Airgram No. A-229 from Guatemala dated May 8, 1944, comprising document 330.

3/ Airgram No. A-250 from Guatemala dated May 19, 1944, and Cable No. 2161 to Bern dated June 24, 1944.

4/ Airgram No. A-286 from Port-au-Prince dated May 24, 1944, comprising document 331.

passports issued fraudulently or the holders of Haitian passports who acquired citizenship under the laws of 1939 and whose citizenship had subsequently been cancelled by a decree-law of February 4, 1942, because of their failure to return to Haiti.1/

Investigation by the Board revealed that under this decree-law of February, 1942, about which the Swiss had been instructed, naturalized persons in Europe subsequent to May 29, 1939, were declared to have lost their Haitian citizenship unless they succeeded in reaching Haiti on or before August 5, 1942. Haiti was therefore asked to make a prompt declaration to the effect that this statute was not applicable to persons who continuously since prior to February 4, 1942, had been within territory under the control of Germany or Italy. The Board pointed out that by exempting persons who, through no fault of their own, had been unable to comply with the condition subsequently imposed, protection could be extended to save a number of innocent lives.2/

In response to this proposal, Haiti agreed, as a humanitarian measure, to recognize the validity of all Haitian passports held by persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory, including those of persons who had been unable to comply with the decree-law of February, 1942, pending an examination of each case.3/ Instructions along these lines were transmitted by Haiti to Swiss authorities in August, 1944.4/

Honduras. The Honduran Government promised full cooperation in connection with the projected exchange as well as in demanding that the rights of persons holding Honduran passports or claiming citizenship on the basis of consular documents be respected.5/

In May, 1944, the United States transmitted a message addressed by Honduras to Switzerland, as the Honduran protecting power,

- 1/ Airgram No. A-321 from Port-au-Prince dated June 15, 1944.
- 2/ Airgram No. A-216 to Port-au-Prince dated July 5, 1944, comprising document 332.
- 3/ Airgram No. A-369 from Port-au-Prince dated July 12, 1944, comprising document 333.
- 4/ Dispatch No. 159 from Port-au-Prince dated August 16, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 127 from Tegucigalpa dated April 26, 1944, comprising document 334.



directing that Germany be advised that persons possessing Honduran passports or consular documents were to be safeguarded and accorded all the immunities, rights, and privileges accorded to civilian internees of enemy nations under the Geneva Convention.1/

Nicaragua. Following representations to the Nicaraguan Government, it was learned that the practice of that Government had generally been to decline to confirm the validity of irregularly issued documents when questions were raised by the Germans through the protecting power.2/ Shortly thereafter, however, the Nicaraguan Foreign Office advised the United States Embassy in Managua that instructions had been dispatched on April 22, 1944, to the Swiss Government, asking that protection be extended to all persons in enemy territory bearing Nicaraguan passports.3/ Inasmuch as the Swiss Foreign Office in June, 1944, advised Minister Harrison that no such instructions had been received by it,4/ the Nicaraguan Foreign Office, at the Board's instigation,5/ repeated its instructions to the Swiss Foreign Office on July 19, 1944.6/

Nicaragua meanwhile consented to support the proposed exchange of Latin American internees in occupied Europe.7/

An approach was also made by Nicaragua to the Spanish Government in the interests of having returned to Vittel any bearers of Nicaraguan passports who might have been removed from there.8/ The Spanish Foreign Minister was said to have agreed to use his good offices toward that end.9/

1/ Cable No. 1632 to Bern dated May 10, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 2137 from Managua dated April 17, 1944.

3/ Airgram No. A-177 from Managua dated April 24, 1944, comprising document 335.

4/ Cable No. 3871 from Bern dated June 17, 1944.

5/ Airgram No. A-233 to Managua dated July 7, 1944.

6/ Airgram No. A-298 from Managua dated July 20, 1944.

7/ Airgram No. A-200 from Managua dated May 9, 1944, comprising document 336.

8/ Airgram No. A-226 from Managua dated May 27, 1944.

9/ Airgram No. A-239 from Managua dated June 8, 1944.

Paraguay. Following informal assurances that Paraguay would cooperate along the lines the Board proposed,<sup>1/</sup> a statement was obtained in which the Paraguayan Government formally agreed to recognize the validity of Paraguayan passports held by persons in German-controlled territory and authorized this Government to negotiate an exchange including persons holding such passports. In connection with the proposed exchange, preference was requested for native Paraguayans.<sup>2/</sup>

According to information given the United States Embassy in Paraguay, the good offices of the Spanish Charge d'Affaires at Asuncion were utilized by Paraguay in admonishing the German Government to respect the rights of persons holding Paraguayan documentation.<sup>3/</sup>

In view of a report from the United States Embassy in Madrid that as of August 9, 1944, no representations had yet been made to the Spanish Government by Paraguayan representatives in Berlin<sup>4/</sup> authorizing arrangements toward accomplishing an exchange on Spanish territory of German nationals in Paraguay and Bolivia against persons in German-occupied territories bearing the documentation of those countries,<sup>5/</sup> arrangements were made for appropriate representations to be communicated to the protecting power through the United States Government. Authorization also was extended by Paraguay for the issuance through the Spanish Embassy in Berlin of new passports to replace many that had been scheduled to expire.<sup>6/</sup>

Peru. Following representations by the United States Embassy in Peru, the Peruvian Foreign Office indicated that the Swiss Government in January 1944 submitted a list of 48 persons interned in Axis countries and inquired as to whether Peru would honor Peruvian passports held by these internees. The Peruvian

<sup>1/</sup> Airgrams No. A-139 and A-148 from Asuncion dated April 22 and April 29, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Dispatch No. 2163 from Asuncion dated June 8, 1944, comprising document 337.

<sup>3/</sup> Dispatch No. 2052 from Asuncion dated May 4, 1944, and Airgram No. A-185 from Asuncion dated May 20, 1944.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 2753 from Madrid dated August 9, 1944.

<sup>5/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

<sup>6/</sup> Cables No. 549 and No. 654 from Asuncion dated September 28 and November 20, 1944.

Government declined to recognize the documents in question on the assertion that they had been fraudulently obtained.1/ In response to this Government's recommendation that in the future such passports be honored for humanitarian reasons, a Foreign Office spokesman expressed sympathy with the suggestion but insisted that a list of claimants to Peruvian nationality be furnished as a basis for further negotiations.2/

In view of the absence of any complete list of holders of Peruvian documents, and in view of the jeopardy in which reference to any particular names would place other holders of Peruvian documents in enemy territory, the Board replied that the only appropriate procedure was for Peru to approach Germany with reference to all such persons generally and without naming any particular persons.3/

Efforts to obtain Peruvian consent to this proposal, however, proved unsuccessful, though the Foreign Office did reiterate that should individual cases of persons holding passports irregularly issued in the name of Peru be brought to its attention, it would consider each "on its merits."4/

Uruguay. In May 1944 the Uruguayan Government agreed to cooperate fully in the Board's program of passport recognition and in support of the proposed exchange of internees.5/ Instructions were promptly cabled to the Uruguayan Minister in Bern, directing that an appropriate request be made of Switzerland, as the Uruguayan protecting power.6/

Venezuela. In April, 1944, the Venezuelan Government indicated its intention of cooperating fully with this Government in demanding that the rights of such internees holding Venezuelan passports or consular papers be respected, and in negotiating for

1/ Airgram No. A-357 from Lima dated April 10, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 610 from Lima dated May 8, 1944.

3/ Airgram No. A-445 to Lima dated June 12, 1944.

4/ Dispatch No. 790 from Lima dated July 7, 1944, comprising document 338.

5/ Cable No. 457 from Montevideo dated May 17, 1944.

6/ Cable No. 570 from Montevideo dated June 16, 1944, comprising document 339.

an exchange against German nationals of all internees holding Latin American documentation.<sup>1/</sup> A demand for the protection of holders of passports issued in the name of Venezuela was subsequently transmitted to the Germans through the Swiss.<sup>2/</sup>

JOINT DEMANDS MADE THROUGH EUROPEAN NEUTRALS. Emphatic and repeated demands were thus made of Germany through both Switzerland and Spain for the purpose of obtaining assurances that persons in enemy territory claiming the nationality of American republics would be accorded all the rights and privileges to which such nationals were entitled.

As a result of these representations, there were indications that the Germans were willing to consider all persons in this category as eligible for any exchange that might be worked out against German civilians interned in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>3/</sup> Moreover, the Swiss Legation in Berlin on May 11, 1944, obtained assurances from the Germans that no further deportations of holders of Latin American documents then in German internment would take place after that date. The Germans refused, however, to guarantee protection to persons holding "more or less doubtful" passports in eastern territories and not interned on the date specified, except upon the furnishing to the German Government of lists of such claimants, accompanied by appropriate declarations from the governments whose nationalities were claimed.<sup>4/</sup>

Board's Response to German Position. For the guidance of the Swiss in further negotiations, the Board promptly indicated that this Government could not accept that distinction which the Germans sought to draw between holders of Latin American documents who were in internment camps and those who were elsewhere; moreover, the Board indicated that Foreign Office and other officials who bore any responsibility for the consignment of persons holding Latin American documents to what the Germans had described as the "general treatment accorded to Eastern European Jews," or to similar treatment, should expect personally to bear the consequences.

- 1/ Airgram No. A-323 from Caracas dated April 15, 1944, comprising document 340.
- 2/ Dispatch No. 5881 from Caracas dated May 9, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 3871 from Bern dated June 17, 1944, comprising document 312.
- 4/ Cable No. 4223 from Bern dated July 3, 1944, comprising document 314 ; see also Dispatch No. 8694 from Bern dated July 8, 1944.



The Board also protested the injustice and the unprecedented nature of the procedure under which the Germans had arbitrarily declared certain Latin American documents to be invalid. The Swiss were asked to relay this Government's insistence that only the government in whose name such documents were issued could deny their validity. The Board's reply went on to demand that the Germans return to internment camps reserved for nationals of American republics all persons to whom such documents had been issued but who had been removed from such camps.1/

Access Sought to Internment Camps. Meanwhile, in June, 1944, private reports reached the Board to the effect that a number of persons claiming the nationality of the United States and of other American republics might be held in camps situated in German and German-controlled territory to which the protecting powers and the International Red Cross had no access or else access of the most restricted kind. Included in this category were the camps of Bergen-Belsen near Hannover, Germany; Bergau near Dresden, Germany; Drancy near Paris; Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia; and a camp reportedly known as Dost or Tost in Poland. Extraordinary restrictions placed by the German authorities upon communications with these camps had deprived the persons detained there and the protecting power of normal means of dealing with their claims to the protection of foreign states.

The Board therefore felt that in order to protect the vital interests of any such detainees claiming the citizenship of the United States or of other American republics, it was essential that visits be made to these camps by neutral observers. Accordingly, Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were asked to bring the matter to the attention of the Swiss Government, as the protecting power, in order that an investigation might be launched. Article 86 of the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention as applied to interned civilians by mutual agreement of the belligerents was to be the basis of the request to visit such camps.2/

Repeated requests subsequently made by the Swiss for authority to visit Bergen-Belsen, in particular, were denied by the Germans, however, on the assertion that there were no persons interned there who were entitled to Swiss protection.3/

1/ Cable No. 2490 to Bern dated July 21, 1944, comprising document 341.

2/ Cable No. 2149 to Bern dated June 24, 1944, comprising document 342.

3/ See, for example, Dispatch No. 9250 from Bern dated September 15, 1944.

Minister Harrison later forwarded to the Board a summary of an informal communication from the Swiss giving an account of an interview which a representative of the Swiss Legation in Berlin had with an official of the German Foreign Office. The conversation reported by the Swiss representative demonstrated at least one reason for the impasse reached in negotiations with the German Foreign Office: the S.S. was in absolute control of deportees and political prisoners, including holders of Latin American passports, and the German Foreign Office was able to exert little if any influence over S.S. policies and actions.<sup>1/</sup>

New Deportations from Vittel Reported. In August, 1944, the Board cabled Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland, advising them of information it had received through the Inter-governmental Committee <sup>2/</sup> to the effect that, despite German assurances to the Swiss Government, further deportations from Camp Vittel had taken place May 16, 1944.<sup>3/</sup> A sharp protest against these actions was promptly lodged through the Swiss Government, but the Germans denied the right of the Swiss to intervene for the protection of persons who were allegedly not nationals of the countries under Swiss protection.<sup>4/</sup> (Repeated Swiss inquiries with respect to the whereabouts of the persons removed from Vittel, however, eventually elicited the statement from an official of the German Foreign Office that all of this group had remained in France, at either Compiègne or Drancy.<sup>5/</sup> In view of the swift Allied occupation of France, it was presumed that persons detained at these camps were eventually liberated by Allied troops.)

The new deportations from Vittel gave fresh impetus to the plans being developed for an actual exchange of Latin American passport holders against German civilians interned in the Western

1/ Cable No. 7360 from Bern dated November 6, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 6150 from London dated August 2, 1944, Lists of persons reportedly removed from Vittel on various occasions were obtained by Minister Harrison and forwarded to the Board; see Dispatches No. 8466 and 8905 from Bern dated June 12 and August 2, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 2667 to Bern dated August 3, 1944; see also Cable No. 2737 to Bern dated August 9, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 5109 from Bern dated August 8, 1944; see also Cable No. 5894 from Bern dated September 7, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 6471 from Bern dated September 29, 1944.

Hemisphere, since it was obvious that their inclusion on some exchange list promised more effective protection.<sup>1/</sup> The Intergovernmental Committee reported that efforts were being made by the Jewish Agency for Palestine and by British exchange authorities to have those among the deportees holding Palestine certificates (in addition to their Latin American documents) included in a German-British exchange.<sup>2/</sup> Inasmuch as the Germans were reported to favor South American exchange, however, the type of exchange proposed by the Board seemed to offer the best chance of delivering these persons from the hands of the Nazis.

New Basis Advanced by Germans for Non-Recognition. German non-recognition of Latin American passports held by Jews in German-controlled territory had originally been founded on their alleged doubt as to the eligibility of the persons concerned for exchange and the acceptance of the documents involved by the issuing governments. After their eligibility for exchange had been confirmed and the interested governments had notified Germany through their protecting powers that the document holders should be protected notwithstanding any doubts as to the validity of the documents, German authorities advanced the argument that their refusal to recognize claims to Latin American citizenship was based not on expiration of the validity of the passports but on their view that antecedents of the Jews involved and the type of identity papers they held constituted adequate evidence that such papers had been obtained "ad hoc."<sup>3/</sup>

The Board promptly requested that the Swiss stress the position of this Government that it was unable to recognize any right of the German authorities to pass upon the validity of documents issued in the name of other sovereign governments and that it refused as irrelevant any attempt by German officials to question the validity of Latin American documents by reason of antecedents of the Jews involved, or the type of identity papers, or on any other basis. All of these excuses were emphatically rejected by this Government, and the Swiss were asked to draw to the attention of the German officials involved the serious consequences of their attitude.<sup>4/</sup>

1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

2/ Cable No. 6150 from London dated August 2, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 5689 from Bern dated August 31, 1944, comprising document 343.

4/ Cable No. 3180 to Bern dated September 14, 1944, comprising document 344.

Compilation of Protective Lists Begun. In view of the turn which Swiss negotiations with the Germans had taken and in line with a previous recommendation of the Swiss, the Board agreed that efforts should be made to give the Swiss such data as it was possible to assemble concerning the nationality claims of individuals in Germany or German-controlled territory, to be used as the basis of further negotiations with the Germans. The compilation of such lists presented considerable difficulties, however. War conditions had seriously interfered with communications between Latin American governments and their European missions, resulting in incomplete records; moreover, it was realized that there were many holders of such passports whose identities were unknown to the issuing governments.

Board Representative McClelland and local representatives in Switzerland of organizations having records on this subject were therefore asked to endeavor to obtain lists as complete as possible to transmit to Swiss authorities. It was hoped that the Swiss would agree to transmit the lists to Germany without awaiting confirmation by the various Latin American governments, in view of the humanitarian considerations involved and in view of this country's status as the power handling the exchange of persons whose eligibility would be established by their being placed on the lists.1/

A number of such lists were later prepared and submitted by Board Representative McClelland. Special efforts were directed toward completing a list of persons at Bergen-Belsen for the purpose of assisting the Swiss in trying to obtain access to the camp and exercise more satisfactory protection of the internees than had previously been possible.2/ As a precaution, the Swiss were advised that such lists could not be considered complete and that, in the event of inquiries concerning claimants not on the lists submitted, it was expected that such persons would be treated as and accorded all the rights and privileges of citizens of the countries whose nationality they claimed, pending appropriate investigation by the Swiss.

Although Swiss authorities forwarded these lists to the Swiss Legation in Berlin for its information, the Swiss Foreign Office

1/ Cable No. 3180 to Bern dated September 14, 1944, comprising document 344.

2/ Cable No. 6470 from Bern dated September 29, 1944.



took the position that the lists alone could not serve as the basis of establishing the right to claim Latin American nationality unless officially confirmed by the interested governments.1/

In view of the limited use to which the Swiss were willing to put lists of this character, the Board asked the United States Missions in the various Latin American countries to speed representations previously suggested 2/ concerning the urgency of extending to the Swiss general confirmation of these lists.

The submission of these lists to the Swiss was subsequently generally endorsed by the Latin American governments and Swiss authorities in turn made them the subject of specific representations to the Germans.

Steps Taken To Insure Protection to Passport Holders in Hungary. Although the Board in July, 1944, took care to reiterate to its representatives in both Bern and Madrid, for the guidance of the protecting powers, that the term "German-controlled" territory or areas, as used in the Board's negotiations relating to the protection of persons holding documents issued in the names of American republics, included Hungary,3/ the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary 4/ gave rise to efforts to insure formal support of this position on the part of the other American republics. Thus, in a circular communication addressed to United States Missions in such Latin American countries as had not already made arrangements for their interests in Hungary to be taken care of, the Board asked that appropriate officials be consulted in an effort to persuade these various governments to arrange for some neutral country to assume such representation. Although the interest of these governments in Hungary might be nominal, it was pointed out that such

1/ Cable No. 7613 from Bern dated November 13, 1944, comprising document 345.

2/ Airgram No. A-253 to Paraguay dated September 13, 1944; repeated on the same date to Bolivia; substance repeated on September 19, 1944, in a Circular Airgram to Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela, comprising document 346.

3/ Cable No. 2407 to Bern dated July 13, 1944, comprising document 347 ; and Cable No. 1889 to Madrid dated July 4, 1944.

4/ See Resuce from Hungary.

representation in Hungary, preferably by Switzerland, was an essential first step in the humanitarian effort to save the lives of persons there holding documents issued in the names of these governments.1/

As a result of affirmative responses received in reply to these representations, the protective offices of the Swiss were formally insured.

Hungarians Refused Immediate Protection. When the Hungarian Government was informed by Switzerland that such Swiss protection had been authorized for all persons in Hungary bearing passports or other documents issued in the name of any of the American republics, the Hungarian Foreign Office before agreeing to consider the matter further insisted upon being advised whether the governments requesting this treatment guaranteed to accord reciprocity to Hungary.2/

In response to this position, the Swiss were asked to inform Hungarian authorities that this Government would treat as a Hungarian national any person in the United States claiming Hungarian nationality even if the claim were not well established; moreover, the Swiss were requested to advise the Hungarians that this Government assumed that other American republics would also accede to such a request in the event Hungarian authorities were really desirous of making it. The Swiss were asked to indicate through such informal channels as might be available, however, the fact that, under the circumstances, this Government considered the Hungarian inquiry to be specious and an endeavor to stall for time. For this reason, the Swiss were requested to reiterate the warning of this Government that Hungarian officials would be held personally accountable for any harm that might befall any person claiming the nationality of an American republic as the result of the Hungarian Government's failure to accord him the rights and privileges due to a national of an American republic.3/

Slovakian Deportations Proceeded. Early in October 1944, according to word reaching Board Representative McClelland in Bern, a

1/ Circular Airgram to Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, El Salvador, and Venezuela dated August 1, 1944, comprising document 348.

2/ Cable No. 6292 from Bern dated September 22, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 3427 to Bern dated October 5, 1944, comprising document 349.

group of 300 to 400 Jews holding Latin American passports had been interned at Marianka, from which they were deported shortly thereafter.1/

A later report from Bern indicated that, as a result of special efforts on the part of Slovak authorities, this group of claimants to Latin American nationality had originally been placed in the camp at Marianka under Slovak police protection, along with a considerable number of bona fide American citizens. Evacuation of the entire camp, except for eight of the bona fide nationals, had been ordered by the Gestapo, along with the general Slovakian deportations, on the pretext that the identity papers held by those concerned were all of a doubtful nature.2/

Following the receipt of this information, both Switzerland and Spain were asked to inquire into the matter and to make immediate arrangements to exercise their protective powers on behalf of the deportees.3/

Efforts were also made to learn through the Vatican the whereabouts of the persons deported.4/ Repeated questioning of Slovak authorities by the Apostolic Nunciature in Bratislava and by local representatives of the International Red Cross, however, invariably evoked the response that nothing was known as to the whereabouts of the group deported.5/ Word later received from the Vatican based on a report from the Slovak Government indicated that German military authorities had attempted to justify the deportations by alleging that the Jews in Slovakia had obtained arms from Partisan sources and therefore constituted a danger to the Germans so long as they remained on Slovak territory.6/

1/ Cable No. 6938 from Bern dated October 19, 1944, comprising document 350.

2/ Cable No. 7163 from Bern dated October 28, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 3648 to Bern and No. 3382 to Madrid, both dated October 26, 1944.

4/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated October 23, 1944.

5/ Letters from the Apostolic Delegate dated November 30 and December 16, 1944.

6/ See Rescue from Czechoslovakia.

Protest Over Deportations Held Unacceptable. Meanwhile, in view of persistent reports concerning the deportations in Hungary and Slovakia, an effort had been made to communicate to the German Government through Swiss channels this Government's protest against such deportations, and to reiterate the demand that all persons holding documents issued in the names of American republics who had been deported from recognized civilian internment camps should be returned immediately to camps supervised by the International Red Cross. The proposed communication also reiterated the determination of this Government to hold strictly accountable all persons sharing the guilt for deportations and other forms of persecution.1/

The Swiss in turn reported that the German Government refused to recognize the right of the United States to make representations in matters not concerned with the protection of American nationals. Moreover, it had returned as "unacceptable" the notes from the Swiss transmitting these views. The Swiss Minister to Berlin later attributed the refusal of the German Government to accept this and similar messages to their threatening tone and to objections on the part of the Germans to accepting reproaches of this kind from another government.2/

In view of the position taken by the Germans in this matter, the Swiss Foreign Office saw no useful purpose in making the representations which the Board had requested concerning the deportation of bearers of documents issued in the names of American republics who were formerly interned at Marianka in Slovakia.

The Foreign Office later indicated, however, that it would make the desired approach to German authorities with respect to persons who were bona fide nationals of the United States and of Latin American countries represented by Switzerland.3/

In response to these observations of the Swiss, Board Representative McClelland was advised that it was the Board's view that the transmission by the protecting power of messages regarding the mistreatment of victims of enemy persecution served a useful purpose regardless of whether or not the enemy government "accepted" such messages in a formal sense.

1/ Cable No. 3245 to Bern dated September 20, 1944, comprising document 351.

2/ Cable No. 7668 from Bern dated November 21, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 7542 from Bern dated November 15, 1944, comprising document 352.



With respect to the proposed approach concerning bona fide nationals, it was pointed out that, in view of this Government's stand regarding the holders of documents issued in the names of American republics, a stand shared by the Inter-American Advisory Committee for Political Defense,<sup>1/</sup> no distinction between claimants to American nationalities, on the theory that some might be bona fide while others might not, could be countenanced in communications to enemy governments relating to the treatment to be accorded such persons.<sup>2/</sup>

Other Swiss Action Proposed. The special interest of this Government in citizens and claimants to citizenship of the United States had meanwhile been indicated in a cable to Bern asking that the Swiss be requested to inform the German Government that this Government expected to obtain assurances that the German authorities in Slovakia had not taken any action against claimants to citizenship of the United States which deprived them of any of the rights to which they were entitled, and that if any such persons had been so deprived of their rights or had been removed from Slovakia to some other area under German control, the German Government should provide the names of the persons concerned and information regarding their whereabouts and welfare.<sup>3/</sup>

Later, upon receipt of information to the effect that German authorities in Slovakia had simply torn up Salvadoran documents which they considered to be doubtful,<sup>4/</sup> the Board asked Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland to request that the Swiss protest such action and point out to the German authorities that, as was well known to the German Government, the persons holding such identity papers had been recognized by the United States as eligible for exchange against civilian internees of German nationality and that, pending such exchange, it had been understood that they would be accorded the same treatment that the German Government would expect this Government to accord to civilian internees of German nationality. The Board repeated its request that the Swiss attempt to obtain information from the German Government concerning the whereabouts of these holders of Salvadoran identity papers and assurances that they would be held in civilian internment camps pending exchange.<sup>5/</sup>

1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

2/ Cable No. 4154 to Bern dated December 8, 1944, comprising document 353.

3/ Cable No. 3852 to Bern dated November 11, 1944, comprising document 354.

4/ Cable No. 8407 from Bern dated December 29, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 256 to Bern dated January 17, 1945.

Board's Efforts Saved Thousands. In transmitting these and other requests over a period of many months for the purpose of invoking all possible protection to endangered minorities through diplomatic channels, and in making it clear that the responsible German and satellite authorities denying such protection would be held strictly accountable for their deviations from the accepted principles of such diplomacy, the Board enabled the survival in enemy territory of several thousand Jews whose fate might otherwise have been the tragic lot of Eastern European Jews in general. The real significance of the Board's efforts in this direction did not become fully apparent, however, until after the military collapse of Germany, with the discovery of the sordid details of persecution and slaughter practiced upon the great masses of unprotected minority groups, from which treatment beneficiaries of the Board's efforts had been excepted.

II 0 - 2. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

RECOGNITION OF SEPHARDICS CLAIMING SPANISH NATIONALITY

In April 1944 the Board learned from private sources that some 400 Sephardic Jews residing in Athens had been imprisoned there in a concentration camp. A message was therefore sent to Ambassador Hayes in Madrid, asking that he approach appropriate Spanish officials to advise them of the situation of these individuals, who were said to be Spanish nationals, and to enlist the aid of the Spanish Government in recognizing and extending protection to the individuals involved, thereby forestalling deportation to Poland and almost certain death. Ambassador Hayes was authorized to assure the Spanish Government that funds would be made available for the support in Spain of such persons as might be evacuated to that country, and that prompt action to speed their departure from Spain to other places of refuge would be taken by the Board. 1/

Since the Spanish Government had on past occasions been prevailed upon by the Holy See to recognize groups of Sephardics in Axis-held territory as Spanish nationals, the Board also arranged for the enlistment of Vatican aid in obtaining Spanish recognition and protection for the refugees in Athens. 2/ The Vatican in turn approached the Spanish Government on the matter. 3/

The substance of various reports received by the Board concerning the general fate of Jews in Greece was also sent to Ambassador Hayes and to American representative Harold Tittmann at Vatican City. Under these circumstances, the Board pointed out, the steps previously requested to rescue Jews in Greece claiming Spanish nationality had become especially urgent. 4/

- 1/ Cable No. 1108 to Madrid dated April 21, 1944, comprising document 355.
- 2/ Cable No. 1414 to Bern dated April 24, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 2944 from Bern dated May 9, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 1360 to Madrid dated May 25, 1944, and Cable No. 1671 to Bern dated May 13, 1944. See also Rescue from Greece.

Details of Significant Conversation Reported. On May 27, 1944, the Board asked Ambassador Hayes for comments and suggestions with respect to a conversation concerning Sephardic Jews in Athens allegedly held a short time before between the Spanish Ambassador in Lisbon and the representative in Portugal of the World Jewish Congress. Spanish Ambassador Franco was reported to have stated that Spain was not only not anti-Semitic but that on the contrary, his brother, General Franco, was very much interested in the Jewish question. Moreover, the Ambassador was said to have assured the World Jewish Congress representative that steps would be taken without delay to obtain from the Germans the release of the 400 Sephardics in Greece claiming Spanish nationality, along with permission for them to leave that country. 1/

Sephardics Deported to Theresienstadt. Before it could be determined whether or not Spain was inclined to extend protection to the Sephardic group in Athens, as the reported interview with Ambassador Franco had promised, word was received from private sources to the effect that all of these Sephardics had been deported to Theresienstadt. At this point the Board therefore directed its representations toward persuading the Spanish Government to provide documentary protection for claimants to Spanish nationality in various German concentration camps to enable them to reach Spain, where they would either remain or, if unacceptable, would be enabled to proceed to Palestine, North Africa, or to other destinations.

Spanish Documentation Provided for Sephardics. Shortly thereafter representations made by the Spanish Government along these lines were instrumental in saving from imminent deportation to Poland a group of some 500 Sephardics, presumably including the 400 deported from Athens, all of whom were allowed to leave German concentration camps and proceed to Spain on the strength of documentation provided by Spanish diplomatic and consular representatives. Most of these Sephardics were transferred to Camp Lyautey. 2/

Sephardics at Bergen-Belsen. According to a report reaching the Board during the summer of 1944, the Spanish Government had been negotiating with the Germans for some time for the release of an additional group of Sephardics, along with approximately 50 Jewish rabbis and their families. By

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1/ Airgram No. A-292 to Madrid dated May 27, 1944.

2/ See Rescue to and through Spain.



September, however, it had become apparent that nothing was being done to accomplish the actual evacuation of this group, despite the fact that exit permits were understood to be available. The Board meanwhile learned that the group consisted of about 155 persons and was being held at Camp Bergen-Belsen near Hannover, Germany. In view of the imminent danger to the lives of these persons as long as they remained in Axis territory, the Board asked Ambassador Hayes to intercede with the Spanish Government to bring about their immediate release and their admission into Spain. In the event military developments made transportation impossible, Ambassador Hayes was asked to urge the Spanish Government to exercise the greatest possible vigilance in safeguarding the lives of these persons by placing them under the direct protection of Spanish diplomatic or consular personnel and by all other appropriate methods. 1/

Removal of Bergen-Belsen Group to Switzerland Proposed.

Ambassador Hayes in turn reported that the Embassy had suggested to the Spanish Government on September 25, 1944, that, in view of the transportation difficulties involved, Spain endeavor to arrange for the temporary entry of this group into Switzerland. 2/ Instructions along these lines were promptly sent by the Spanish Foreign Office to Berlin and Bern. 3/

The Board asked Minister Harrison in Bern to support any request made by his Spanish colleague there in this connection. 4/

Board Representative McClelland meanwhile advised the Board that as the result of representations made by a private agency some weeks before, permission had been obtained from the Swiss Federal Police for these Jews to enter Switzerland. The problem of how to get them out of Bergen-Belsen, however,

1/ Cable No. 2519 to Madrid dated September 11, 1944, comprising document 356.

2/ Cable No. 3640 from Madrid dated November 3, 1944, comprising document 357; see also Dispatch No. 3169 from Madrid dated October 2, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 3873 from Madrid dated November 28, 1944; see also Dispatch No. 3482 from Madrid dated November 29, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 3005 to Madrid dated November 11, 1944.

remained; it was thought that a formal request by the Spanish Government for the release of the group would enable the Swiss to raise with the Germans the question of their departure. 1/

Late in March 1945 a group of Sephardic Jews claiming Turkish nationality were reported to have been released from Bergen-Belsen as a part of a Turkish-German exchange; according to information furnished by these released detainees, the group of 155 Spanish Sephardics deported from Athens were still at Bergen-Belsen but were expected to leave soon for Switzerland. 2/ No further report concerning this particular group was received. It was thought, however, that their removal to Switzerland had been precluded by the complete disorganization of German transportation facilities and the rapid pace of military developments in the period immediately preceding the liberation of the camp in April 1945.

1/ Cable No. 7355 from Bern dated November 4, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 692 from Lisbon dated March 30, 1945.

II O - 3. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

RECOGNITION OF SEPHARDICS CLAIMING PORTUGUESE NATIONALITY

According to information reaching the Board later in April 1944, there was also in Greece a small group of Sephardics claiming Portuguese nationality who were threatened with deportation or death. Minister Norweb and Board Representative Dexter, acting under instructions from the Board, therefore approached appropriate officials in the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a view to enlisting the aid of the Portuguese Government in extending protection to the refugees in question. Portugal was asked to advise German and other authorities in Greece that upon the assurance of a claim to Portuguese nationality, all the rights, privileges, and immunities of a Portuguese national should be extended to the claimant pending investigation by the Portuguese Government. It was also urged that the Portuguese Government postpone making adverse determinations in such cases until after the war, in view of the dire consequences that would befall refugees whose claims were rejected. The Portuguese Government was assured that, in the event actual evacuation to Portugal proved necessary for the protection of the persons concerned, funds for the support of such refugees would be made available and prompt action would be taken to effect their departure from Portugal to other places of refuge. 1/

The Board also cabled Harold Tittman, American representative at Vatican City, directing that steps be taken to enlist the support of appropriate Vatican officials in this humanitarian task by means of representations in Portugal similar to those made through the United States Legation there. 2/ These representations were subsequently made by the Papal Nuncio in Portugal. 3/

1/ Cable No. 1285 to Lisbon dated May 6, 1944, and Cable No. 1396 from Lisbon dated May 9, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 1581 to Bern dated May 6, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 295 from Naples dated June 28, 1944.

Shortly thereafter the Board advised Minister Norweb and Board Representative Dexter, as well as American representative Tittman at Vatican City, of the substance of various reports it had received relating to the general fate of Jews in Greece. In view of these circumstances, the Board indicated that the steps previously requested to rescue Jews in Greece claiming Portuguese nationality assumed even greater urgency. 1/

On May 25 Minister Norweb cabled that this matter had been referred by the Portuguese Government to its representative in Athens "for attention." 2/

Promise of Protection Came Too Late. The Portuguese Government finally late in June 1944 agreed to admit all Jews from Greece having any claim to Portuguese nationality without preliminary investigations; at the same time this Government's offer of maintenance in the case of any persons who proved after arrival not to be Portuguese nationals was accepted. 3/

By the time this response was received, however, word had reached the Board from private sources to the effect that all Jews of foreign nationality interned in Athens had been deported to Theresienstadt.

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- 1/ Cable No. 1365 to Lisbon dated May 15 and Cable No. 1671 to Bern dated May 13, 1944; see also Rescue from Greece.
  - 2/ Cable No. 1599 from Lisbon dated May 25, 1944.
  - 3/ Dispatch No. 653 from Lisbon dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 358.



## II O - 4. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

### REINSTATEMENT OF TURKISH CITIZENSHIP TO CERTAIN JEWISH REFUGEES

Jews in Greece Claiming Turkish Nationality. In the early part of 1944, following receipt of information concerning the imprisonment in a concentration camp in Athens of many Jews claiming Spanish, Portuguese, and Turkish nationality, Ambassador Steinhardt asked the Turkish Government to extend its protection to all endangered persons in areas under German control claiming Turkish nationality.

About 60 families of Turkish origin were saved and repatriated through the efforts of the Turkish Legation in Athens.<sup>1/</sup> Funds supplied by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee under a license recommended by the Board were used to supply relief to many of these repatriates.

Jews of Turkish Origin in France. Steps were also taken by Ambassador Steinhardt to save some 10,000 Jews in France who were threatened with deportation because they had been divested of Turkish nationality by operation of Turkish law. The Turkish Government was asked to extend protection to these Jews by reinstating their citizenship. The support of the British Ambassador in Turkey was also enlisted by Ambassador Steinhardt in pressing Turkey to act favorably upon this request. As a result of Ambassador Steinhardt's representations, the Turkish Foreign Minister on two occasions instructed the Turkish Ambassador in Vichy to lend every possible assistance to these individuals.

By mid-March 1944 the Turkish Government had authorized entrance visas for about 700 of these persons.<sup>2/</sup> Within a few weeks several hundred Turkish repatriates had actually reached Turkey from France.<sup>3/</sup>

1/ Dispatch No. 596 from Ankara dated March 13, 1944.

2/ Ibid.

3/ Cable No. 1176 from Lisbon dated April 20, 1944, comprising document 359.

It was understood that another several thousand of these Jews, however, had already been deported to Poland and almost certain death, despite repeated protests by the Turkish Ambassador to Vichy. Accordingly, in support of the representations already begun by Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara, the Board addressed an appeal to the Turkish Ambassador in Washington, urging that the Turkish Government advise German and other authorities in France that upon the assertion of a claim to Turkish nationality, the claimant was to be extended all the rights, privileges, and immunities of a Turkish national unless and until, after investigation, the Turkish Government advised such authorities that it had rejected the claim. The position of this Government with respect to refugees in German-controlled areas claiming United States citizenship was cited in support of the Board's request. The Board also indicated that, in the event the Turkish Government should find it possible, pending investigation, to bring about the evacuation from German-controlled areas of claimants to Turkish nationality whose lives were in danger, it would undertake to make funds available from American sources for the maintenance of such refugees and would endeavor to find havens promptly outside Turkey for any such refugees whose claims to Turkish nationality were eventually rejected by the Turkish Government.1/

Executive Director Pehle also took this matter up personally with the Turkish Ambassador in Washington, who agreed to transmit the Board's recommendation to Ankara.

Despite the assertion of the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that most of the Jews in France claiming Turkish nationality had little to substantiate their claims, Ambassador Steinhardt continued to press Turkish officials to do everything in their power to extend protection to these refugees.2/

Hundreds of other Turkish Jews in France, however, remained in increasing danger of deportation. Lists of these refugees were said to have been forwarded to Ankara by Turkish consuls for confirmation of their status,3/ but the Board feared that these determinations, even if affirmative, would come too late to be of any value to the refugees concerned.

The eventual liberation of France by Allied forces put an end to the dangers facing Jews of Turkish origin in that country.

1/ Letter to Turkish Ambassador Ertegun in Washington dated May 3, 1944, comprising document 360; see also letter from the Turkish Ambassador dated May 6, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 876 from Ankara dated May 16, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 1242 from Lisbon dated April 25, 1944.

II O - 5. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

EXCHANGE

Since diplomatic exchanges between the Allied countries and Germany appeared to present an effective method of removing from the hands of the Nazis such persons subject to enemy persecution as could be established as candidates for exchange, the Board gave serious consideration to ways and means of accomplishing such measures. From private sources and from Board representatives abroad, it was learned that there were several thousand Jews in Germany and German-held territory holding papers issued in the names of American Republics for whom exchange against German civilians interned in the Americas offered their best chance of deliverance from Nazi oppression. Thus, one of the first steps taken by the Board in this direction was to arrange through Switzerland and Spain, as the protecting powers, to have Germany and Hungary informed of the demand of the United States and other American republics that persons holding documents issued in the names of these governments; or otherwise claiming such nationalities, be accorded all the rights and privileges to which such nationals were entitled, including the right to be considered eligible for any German-American exchange that might be accomplished. 1/

American Exchange Standards Broadened. In May 1944, as a preliminary to placing before the German Government concrete proposals with respect to the exchange of persons holding documents issued in the names of the American republics, certain necessary steps were jointly undertaken by the State Department and the Board. In the German-American republics' exchanges that had previously been effected, such as those accomplished by means of the "Gripsholm," the persons exchanged had been limited to small numbers of bona fide American nationals nominated by their governments in accordance with a restrictive joint resolution of the American republics adopted in 1943 by the Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense. One reason for the strict limitations embodied in this resolution was the general desire to prevent the return to Germany of individuals capable of aiding her war effort.

1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

Since the security requirements reflected in this resolution had substantially declined in importance since its adoption, and in view of the fact that certain actions on the part of the Germans had placed the lives of many holders of Latin American passports in increasing jeopardy, a new resolution was drafted in May 1944 with the joint approval of the State Department and the Board and forwarded to Montevideo. In this draft resolution the way was paved for the progressive exchange of all non-Germans, including Jews and persons of doubtful nationality interned or otherwise confined in German territory, against German nationals currently residing in the Western Hemisphere. First consideration in any exchange effected, however, was to be given to persons bearing passports, visas, or other documentation of non-European origin. 1/

This resolution was unanimously approved by the Committee, with minor changes, on May 31, 1944. "In the opinion of this Committee the resolution stated, the need to rescue . . . persons identical with European racial or political minority groups constitutes a sufficient basis for their admission to this hemisphere in exchange for German nationals resident in the American Republics selected with due regard for security requirements . . ." The resolution called upon all American republics to inform the German Government through appropriate channels that individuals possessing documents "issued by or on behalf of an American Republic, are entitled to full protection in accordance with the terms or customary incidence of such documents." The American republics were also requested to authorize negotiations with the German Government on their behalf "in order to effectuate the exchange of such individuals for German nationals from the Western Hemisphere who desire to be repatriated and who are selected in accordance with such security safeguards as the Republics may mutually determine appropriate . . ." 2/

Since most of the required assurances concerning the protection of holders of Latin American papers and the support of exchange negotiations had already been obtained by the Board, 3/ the State Department was thus in a position to start proposals for exchange. The Board indicated that, in cooperation with other official and humanitarian agencies, it was prepared to underwrite all expenses of such exchanges; moreover, in the event that any of the individuals rescued were not admissible to the countries whose documentation they bore, the Board indicated that it was prepared to arrange for safe havens elsewhere.

1/ Cables No. 297 and 304 to Montevideo dated May 26 and 27, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 509 from Montevideo dated June 3, 1944, comprising document 361.

3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.



In a circular letter to United States Embassies in the various Latin American republics the State Department promptly indicated its desire to proceed as quickly as possible with the presentation to the German Government of concrete proposals based upon the newly adopted resolution. 1/

Initial Approach to Germans Requested. Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland were meanwhile advised of these actions and asked to request the Swiss to bring these preliminary efforts to the attention of the German Government so that the latter's reaction might be obtained. 2/

The Germans were also to be informed that provision was being made for the inclusion of close alien relatives of American citizens in future exchanges of German and United States nationals. 3/

Latin American Passports Group Meanwhile Reached Spain. Earlier in May 1944 the State Department learned that a number of persons bearing Latin American passports whose nationality had not yet been established had been included in a list of nationals of the United States and other American republics approved by the Germans for exchange against a group of Germans from the United States being repatriated on the "Gripsholm." Inasmuch as use of the "Gripsholm" for the exchange of other than repatriated nationals of the participating countries was precluded by the terms of the vessel's charter, 4/ the State Department advised the United States Embassy in Madrid that authorization for the embarkation of these persons on the "Gripsholm" could not be granted. 5/ In accordance with commitments made by the Board with respect to bearers of such documentation, arrangements were made for the care of seven of these refugees in Spain from the time of their arrival in Spain on July 17, 1944, until they could be transferred to Camp Lyautey in North Africa. 6/ The remainder of the refugees denied authority to embark on the "Gripsholm" proceeded to Portugal.

Priority Groupings Established for Continued Exchanges. On September 6, 1944, the State Department advised the United States Embassy in Bern that certain priority groupings had been established

- 1/ Circular Airgram to the various American republics dated June 17, 1944, comprising document 362.
- 2/ Cable No. 1846 to Bern dated May 27, 1944, comprising document 363.
- 3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: United States Visas.
- 4/ Cable No. 1485 from the State Department to Madrid dated May 25, 1944, comprising document 364.
- 5/ Cable No. 1384 from the State Department to Madrid dated May 16, 1944, comprising document 365.
- 6/ Cable No. 2500 from Madrid dated July 17, 1944, comprising document 366.

by the Department in order to permit it to designate which classes of individuals eligible for exchange were to have priority in any given operation. Particularly significant from the Board's point of view was the establishment of a Category F, comprising "Individuals whose lives are in jeopardy and who bear documentation reflecting a right to exercise citizenship of or, alternatively, a right of protection by or admission into one of the republics of the Western Hemisphere, the circumstances of whose cases preclude adequate examination of the juridical basis of such right by the interested government until peace is restored in Europe or appearance is made before a consular or diplomatic officer of the respective republic, whichever first occurs." Spouses and children of individuals coming within this category were likewise included. 1/

This information was immediately relayed to the Swiss Government for the guidance of its representatives in charge of exchange arrangements and other American interests.

Other American republics also were notified by the State Department of the new priorities system established, in order that each might establish similar priorities and inform its protecting power accordingly, thereby laying the basis for some uniformity in exchange negotiations.

Seventh Category Added. On November 9, 1944, the State Department added a seventh category to the priorities groupings. 2/ This classification, Category G, comprised "Immediate family members [spouses and/or children], regardless of the state of their documentation, [of American citizens and 3/] of alien residents of the United States or of other American Republics."

Exchange of "Ad Hoc" Passport Holders Effected in Switzerland. Toward the end of 1944 the Board was advised by Swiss authorities that the Germans had indicated a willingness to have included in a forthcoming German-American exchange (for which arrangements were being made by the State Department) a group of 50 to 75 persons from among the internees at Bergen Belsen holding Latin American documentation. A list of persons from which the exchange candidates were to be selected was obtained through the Swiss Legation at Berlin. 4/

- 1/ Cable No. 3082 from State Department to Bern dated September 6, 1944, comprising document 367.
- 2/ Airgram No. A-540 to Bern dated November 9, 1944, comprising document 368.
- 3/ Cable No. 4289 to Bern dated December 20, 1944, comprising document 369.
- 4/ Cable No. 8293 from Bern dated December 23, 1944, comprising document 370; see also Dispatch No. 10349 of the same date from Bern.

This proposed exchange was finally effected in Switzerland in January 1945, in the course of which more than 800 nationals of the United States and other American republics, along with their immediate relatives, were released. The exchange group included 149 "ad hoc" passport holders from Bergen Belsen instead of 50 to 75 as originally indicated by the Germans. Since the passports held by these individuals did not authorize their entrance into the countries in whose names they were issued, arrangements were made by the Board with military authorities 1/ and with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration 2/ for transportation of 140 of these persons to Marseilles and thence onward to the refugee center at Philippeville in North Africa. 3/ One Category F person had meanwhile died in Switzerland; the remaining eight persons had been hospitalized and were unable to proceed to North Africa.

INFORMATION OBTAINED ON GERMAN-BRITISH EXCHANGES. In June 1944 the Board asked Ambassador Winant to obtain information from the British Foreign Office with respect to whether German-British exchanges had taken place involving Jews holding Palestine certificates. It was felt that knowledge of the procedure followed in placing such persons on exchange lists might be utilized by the Board's representatives abroad and by the representatives of private organizations engaged in rescue and relief work. 4/

In response to Ambassador Winant's inquiry, the British Foreign Office indicated that, as of June 1944, two such German-British exchanges had taken place, one in December 1941 and the other in November 1942. These exchanges had involved about 350 German citizens as against 180 holders of Palestine certificates and their next of kin. According to the Foreign Office, the Palestine Government, in collaboration with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, nominated persons whom it would be willing to have exchanged for German citizens held in Palestine. The names of such persons were then communicated to the German Government through Switzerland as the protecting power. In practice, however, it was said that the German Government often declared itself unable to trace the persons nominated and other Jewish individuals had been substituted.

With respect to the procedure to be followed in placing persons on these exchange lists, it was suggested by the Foreign Office that

- 1/ Cable No. 33 to Paris dated January 3, 1945, comprising document 371; see also Cable No. 438 to Paris dated November 15, 1944.
- 2/ Letter to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration dated January 12, 1945, comprising document 372, and reply dated January 30, 1945, comprising document 373.
- 3/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.
- 4/ Cable No. 4411 to London dated June 3, 1944, comprising document 374.



Jewish organizations or individual inquirers might be advised by the Board to communicate the names of persons in whom they were interested to the Commissioner of Migration and Statistics in Jerusalem. The High Commissioner at Jerusalem would then forward the names of persons accepted for exchange to the Colonial Office in London. 1/ This information was relayed by the Board to private agencies in the United States who might be in a position to make appropriate use of it.

A third German-British exchange was accomplished early in July 1944 in the course of which 283 Jewish refugees from Camp Bergen Belsen in Germany and 61 from Camp Vittel in France reached Turkey en route to Palestine under the supervision of the Turkish Red Crescent. These holders of Palestine certificates had been exchanged for a considerably smaller number of German nationals from Egypt, South Africa, and Palestine, thereby redressing the balance in favor of the Germans which had resulted from the first two exchanges. 2/

Lack of German Candidates Prevented Continued German-British Exchanges. According to word received from private sources, there remained some 3,000 to 4,000 persons in enemy territory holding Palestine certificates whose names had already been supplied by the British through Switzerland as the protecting power to the German Government. Although Germany had accepted the principle of exchanging such individuals, lack of German candidates in British territory prevented further diplomatic exchanges. 3/

Board Aided Refugees in Turkish Exchange Group. In April 1945 the Board learned from a private source that, in the course of a Turkish-German exchange then being effected by means of the "S.S. Drottningholm," a number of Jews lacking proof as to their nationality had been included as part of a group of several hundred Turkish citizens being repatriated from Germany. When the group reached Istanbul, the Turkish Government refused to permit the disembarkation of 134 persons without identification papers on the grounds that these individuals had been placed aboard the exchange ship without prior reference to the Turkish Government and that few if any had any claim to Turkish nationality. According to word received

1/ Cables No. 4889 and 5396 from London dated June 20 and July 8, 1944, comprising documents 375 and 376.

2/ Cable No. 1248 from Ankara dated July 10, 1944.

3/ Various groups of individuals holding Palestine certificates managed to reach Switzerland and other neutral territory on the basis of their documents, though not as exchange candidates; see especially Rescue to and through Turkey and Rescue to and through Switzerland.



by the Board from the United States Embassy in Ankara, Turkish officials were considering sending these individuals back to Germany on the return voyage of the "Drottningholm." 1/

The Board felt strongly that the return to Germany of any Jews released for exchange purposes would have been doubly unfortunate; apart from almost certain hardship to the persons concerned, it was felt that such action might seriously have imperiled the exchange negotiations then being carried on between this Government and the Germans looking toward the departure from Germany of claimants to Latin American nationality. Moreover, it was realized that, from a security standpoint, it was desirable that German nationals and officials be removed from Turkey as soon as possible; if the refugees in question were not accepted by Turkey as exchange material, the number of German nationals permitted to return to Germany aboard the "Drottningholm" would have been correspondingly reduced. Accordingly, the United States Embassy in London was asked to see what could be done toward obtaining entry into Palestine for the group to which the Turks objected. 2/

The British subsequently advised their Embassy in Ankara that, while no special arrangements could be made for the entrance of the "Drottningholm" group into Palestine, individuals eligible under the quota system would be permitted to enter in proper order. 3/

Although 134 individuals had originally been involved in the group declared by the Turks to be unacceptable, all exchangees aboard the "Drottningholm" were eventually permitted to disembark, following representations by the United States Embassy in Ankara, except a group comprised of 7 former Turkish nationals who had been deprived of Turkish citizenship, 70 Jews without identification documents, and 3 individuals who, though apparently Turkish nationals lacked proof of their nationality. These 80 individuals were temporarily placed on board another vessel in Istanbul, where the Turks proposed to hold them pending a decision as to their ultimate destination. 4/

Inasmuch as sleeping and eating accommodations aboard the smaller vessel on which the group had been placed proved inadequate, arrangements were made by the United States Embassy for accommodations ashore, and the permission of the Turkish Foreign Office was

1/ Cable No. 473 from Ankara dated April 7, 1945, comprising document 377.

2/ Cable No. 2757 to London dated April 9, 1945, comprising document 378.

3/ Cable No. 606 from Ankara dated May 4, 1945.

4/ Cable No. 496 from Ankara dated April 11, 1945.

obtained for disembarkation of the group under the same guarantees as to eventual removal from Turkey as the Board had advanced with respect to all persons escaping from Axis territory to Turkish soil. 1/

Following the cessation of hostilities in Europe, final decision on the disposition of the "Drottingholm" group was postponed pending exploration of the possibility of their return to the countries in which they had lived before the war, as well as developments with respect to the number of individuals who might become eligible for quota admission to Palestine. 2/ Costs of maintaining the "Drottningsholm" group were meanwhile assumed by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

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1/ Cable No. 519 from Ankara dated April 15, 1945, comprising document 379; see also Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ Cable No. 518 to Ankara dated May 11, 1945.

## II 0 - 6. RESCUE PROGRAMS: RESCUE THROUGH PROTECTIVE MEASURES

### UNITED STATES VISAS

One of the first efforts of the Board to provide protection on the diplomatic level for endangered persons in enemy territory resulted in the cabling by the State Department in March, 1944, to United States consular officers in Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal of authorization to issue up to 5,000 immigration visas, and such periodic replace visas as might be necessary, for children up to 16 years of age reaching those countries from France. This authorization was later extended to cover children arriving from Hungary as well.1/

New or Replace Visas to Previously Approved Applicants. On March 16, 1944, the Board proposed to the State Department a program designed to help save the lives of a number of persons in enemy-controlled areas holding expired United States immigration visas. Under the plan proposed, visas authorized after the inauguration of security checks on July 1, 1941, but which had become invalid by lapse of time, would be replaced in the case of all persons still in enemy-controlled territory and subject to enemy persecution.2/

The State Department agreed to this program on July 20, 1944.3/

Neutral European countries were accordingly requested to advise enemy governments of their willingness to receive persons for whom United States immigration visas had been authorized after July 1, 1941. United States consular officers in these countries were

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

2/ Letter to the State Department dated March 16, 1944.

3/ Letter from the State Department dated July 20, 1944; see also letter from the State Department dated March 28, 1944.

authorized by the Department of State to "issue new American immigration visas to any such persons to whom an American visa was issued or for whom such visa was authorized after July 1, 1941, provided that (a) such person other than a child under 16 years of age is found upon telegraphic reference to the Department for security check not to be the subject of an adverse report dated subsequent to the previous approval, (b) such person is not affirmatively found by the consul to be inadmissible into the United States under the law, or (c) the consul does not consider that the case is one which should be recommended for consideration under the committee procedure."

Turkey was also requested to admit all persons in enemy territory holding Palestine certificates and to advise enemy governments of its willingness to do so. The assurances given by this Government regarding maintenance and evacuation of refugees were extended to cover such refugees as well.1/

Sweden and Turkey subsequently agreed to cooperate in this program and advised the Hungarian Government accordingly; Turkey also agreed to receive holders of Palestine certificates.2/

Non-quota and Preference Visas. As another means of facilitating the escape of persecuted persons into neutral territory, the Board on May 24, 1944, proposed to the State Department that the issuance of visas be authorized for victims of enemy persecution so related to American citizens and alien residents of the United States as to be entitled to non-quota or preference visas.3/

The State Department gave its approval to this proposal on August 5, 1944.4/ Several weeks then passed in clearing various technical details with the Department of Justice. By then, information from abroad made it doubtful whether German authorities would permit the departure of any Jews from Hungary or other German-controlled areas, whatever permits or visas they might have. Despite this prospect, on August 24, 1944, United States consular officers

1/ Cable No. 665 to Ankara dated July 28, 1944, comprising document 380 ; similar messages were dispatched on the same date to Madrid, Stockholm, and Lisbon, and on August 1, 1944, to Bern.

2/ Cable No. 3074 from Stockholm dated August 12, 1944, comprising document 381 ; and Cable No. 1430 from Ankara dated August 5, 1944, comprising document 382.

3/ Letter to the State Department dated May 24, 1944.

4/ Letter from the State Department dated August 5, 1944.



in Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, and Turkey were authorized to issue United States immigration visas to certain categories of close relatives of United States citizens and of resident aliens entitled to non-quota or preference quota immigration status. At the same time the Swiss Government was asked to inform enemy governments, particularly Germany and Hungary, of this authorization.1/ Hungary was so advised on September 22, 1944.2/

United States Missions in the other countries were also requested to attempt to secure the prompt agreement of the governments to which they were accredited to advise enemy governments of their willingness to permit the entry of persons in the categories described.

The Board then advised private agencies in this country of this action, and with their help began compiling a series of lists of persons who might benefit therefrom. Upon certification by the State Department in the case of holders of lapsed visas, and by the Department of Justice in the case of relatives of the eligibility of the persons listed, these names were transmitted as promptly as their certification permitted, and over a considerable period of time, to Board representatives in Bern and Stockholm for appropriate action.

Swiss Transmitted Lists to Hungary. Following the receipt and transmission to the Swiss of the first of these lists, the Swiss Legation in Berlin requested that, before relaying them to the German Government, consideration be given to the feeling of the Swiss that, on the basis of previous experience, the representations which the Legation had been asked to make to the German authorities would contribute nothing to assure the effective protection of the individuals concerned so long as they could not participate in German-American exchanges.3/

The Board pointed out that under the exchange priorities system already established by the State Department in September 1944, 4/

1/ Cable No. 2918 to Bern dated August 24, 1944, comprising document 383; similar cables were dispatched on the same date to Ankara, Madrid, Stockholm, and Lisbon.

2/ Cable No. 6868 from Bern dated October 14, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 8177 from Bern dated December 16, 1944, comprising document 384.

4/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

these persons were included under category G and thus were exchangeable.1/ Swiss officials were advised accordingly.

When lists of names of persons qualifying for the benefits of the Board's special visa program and last known to be living in Hungary were finally communicated to the Hungarian Foreign Office by Swiss representatives, however, the Hungarians made no response. In view of this reaction, and in view of the fact that the individuals listed were no longer at the addresses given for them and were probably in hiding, the Swiss representative in Budapest was of the opinion that in the future such lists should not be communicated to Hungarian authorities but should be retained at the Swiss Legation, where everything possible would be done to aid them if the persons listed called there.2/

This suggestion of the Swiss was promptly approved by the Board.3/

Swedish Position on Transmission of Lists. In confirming receipt and transmission to the Swedish Foreign Office of lists of persons eligible for inclusion in the Board's special visa programs, Minister Johnson reported that a Foreign Office official stated that no action had been taken to forward these lists to Swedish Legations in the countries concerned. Swedish authorities explained that they were loath to do anything that might in any way jeopardize or retard the program of special measures which had been taken during the preceding months by the Swedish Legation in Budapest to protect Axis victims.4/ The Swedish authorities were of the opinion that presentation of the Board's lists to the Hungarian Government would have an unfavorable result and might conceivably damage their other Jewish relief work, and that no practical value would result from presenting such lists.

With respect to the Board's lists of persons in France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other countries, Swedish authorities, after consultation with the Swedish Minister in Berlin, were

1/ Cable No. 4398 to Bern dated December 30, 1944, comprising document 385.

2/ Cable No. 459 from Bern dated January 22, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 441 to Bern dated January 26, 1945.

4/ See Rescue from Hungary.

reluctant to submit the lists to the German Government out of fear that presentation of these names would adversely affect the outcome of the rather large number of special relief cases already being handled. The Foreign Office accordingly suggested that the Swiss Government could perhaps hand the lists to the German Government with the recommendation that advantage be taken of this opportunity to send Jews to the United States. At the same time, Sweden could repeat the assurances already given to the Germans with respect to its willingness to allow the entry into Sweden of any person to whom a United States immigration visa was issued on or after July 1, 1944.1/

The Board immediately replied that, while it appreciated the weight of the Swedish arguments and would be inclined to accept them, it felt that the attention of the Foreign Office should be drawn to the fact that, after having informed the Germans that Sweden was willing to allow the entry of persons with United States immigration visas, it would seem both necessary and logical for Sweden to follow up this action by informing the Germans of the names of the persons concerned. With respect to the transmission of lists to Hungary, the Board advised Minister Johnson that it agreed that, in view of developments in Hungary, transmission of the names of Jews still in Hungary would be of no likely benefit, but that, since many Hungarian Jews had been deported to Germany and Austria, the transmission of such names might still be beneficial.2/

Turkish Visas Held in Readiness. Following the approach to Turkish Government on this score, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that the rupture of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Germany had made it impossible to carry into effect the Board's proposal for the issuance of Turkish visas to affected categories of persons in Germany. While the liberation of the Balkan countries by the Allied armies had alleviated the problems of persecuted persons in those areas, Turkish Consulates in the Balkans had nevertheless received appropriate instructions with respect to Turkish visas for persons with qualifications for United States visas.3/

1/ Cable No. 5043 from Stockholm dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 386.

2/ Cable No. 2537 to Stockholm dated December 16, 1944, comprising document 387.

3/ Dispatch No. 946 from Ankara dated December 14, 1944.

Transmission of Lists Suspended by V-E Day. Owing to the cessation of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, no further action was taken toward transmitting additional lists of names to the Swiss.



III A - 1. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE PROGRAMS: APPROACHES TO GERMANY  
AND THE SATELLITES TO HALT PERSECUTIONS

APPEALS THROUGH NEUTRAL COUNTRIES

From the outset the Board felt that the best chance of saving the greatest number of Jews and other victims of enemy oppression from death lay in the possibility of changing the actions and attitude of the enemy, particularly of Axis satellites, functionaries, and subordinates. At the time the Board came into existence it had become apparent that Allied successes in the war were already shaking to their foundations the resolution of Nazi collaborators outside of Germany and had implanted in their minds a fearful apprehension of the fate which would be theirs following the Allied victory. There were also indications that perhaps the least wholehearted collaboration given to Germany by her satellites had been with respect to the measures designed to assist Hitler in his organized massacre of Jews - the forced deportations to Poland and the prevention of escape to neutral countries.

For these reasons the Board felt it to be of the utmost importance that this Government begin at once an organized and concentrated effort to make clear by all appropriate means to the Axis satellites, including the Vichy regime in France, that this Government viewed in the most serious light their assistance in any form to Hitler's program to exterminate the Jews and other similar groups, and regarded all such action as criminal participation in organized murder. It was thought that this Government's determination to do everything in its power to rescue such endangered persons should also be brought home to the satellites with special force in order not only to give them a clear view of this Government's attitude in the matter, but also to make apparent to them the opportunities that existed for assisting in the execution of this policy.

The Board's campaign toward accomplishing these measures was not limited to the making of formal representations; attempts were made to carry them out through various appropriate means. 1/

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1/ See also Appeals through the Vatican and Statements and International Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

Warning Relayed to Satellite Authorities. While some action along the lines indicated had, of course, already been taken by this Government, the Board considered it extremely urgent that a new and more concerted effort be undertaken at once, using as a starting point President Roosevelt's unequivocal statement of policy in the Executive Order establishing the Board. Thus one of the first things the Board did was to outline these convictions to the State Department 1/ and, with the approval of the Department, send cables to key United States Missions abroad, asking them to make clear to the satellites through neutral channels both the attitude of this Government concerning continued collaboration and the opportunities that existed for assisting in rescue and relief operations. 2/

Shortly thereafter Minister Norweb in Portugal reported that the substance of this warning had been conveyed through appropriate channels to the Bulgarian and Hungarian Governments; and that steps had also been taken to have the message conveyed to the Rumanian Government. 3/ A later response along the same lines from Bern left no doubt but that the contents of the Board's message reached the satellite authorities for whom it was intended. 4/

In April 1944 the Board learned through the Swedish press and from private sources that there had been an intensification of pressure by the Nazis on Hungary to strengthen the anti-Jewish policy and to deport Polish and other Jews who had escaped to Hungary. Intensified German control of Rumania had also been reported. In view of these developments, the Board cabled Minister Norweb, asking that he continue, through the channels that were available to him, to urge Hungarian and Rumanian resistance to the Nazi demands. 5/

The Board was promptly advised that this warning had been placed in proper channels for transmission to Hungarian and Rumanian authorities. 6/

Increased Foreign Representation in Hungary Urged. Word of increased persecutions and impending deportations in Hungary continued to reach the Board, however. On the theory that the presence of foreigners in official and unofficial capacities might have

- 1/ Letter to the State Department dated February 10, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 770 to Bern dated March 7, 1944; comprising document 388; repeated on the same date to Cairo, Stockholm, Lisbon, and Ankara.
- 3/ Cable No. 779 from Lisbon dated March 11, 1944, comprising document 389.
- 4/ Cable No. 1871 from Bern dated March 27, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 1013 to Lisbon dated April 12, 1944, comprising document 390.
- 6/ Cable No. 1150 from Lisbon dated April 18, 1944.

a deterrent effect on the Nazis in their persecution of minority groups, the Board made representations to the International Red Cross, the Vatican, and to various European neutrals to enlarge their representation in Hungary. During the summer of 1944 Sweden, the Vatican, and eventually the International Red Cross complied with this request and sent special delegations into Hungary where they were able not only to afford relief but also to exercise some degree of moral influence by their presence. 1/

Pointed Warnings to Hungarian Regime Termed "Unacceptable."

Later in 1944, following mass deportations in Hungary in one instance and after Latin American documents entitling their holders to protection had been completely ignored in another, 2/ the Board sought to have strong protests delivered to Hungarian authorities through Switzerland as the protecting power of the United States. The communications presented by the Swiss, however, were curtly returned by the Hungarians as "unacceptable" because of their tone. The protests which the Swiss had sought to deliver, in addition to asking that an end be put to the continuing deportations, warned that individual Hungarian authorities bearing any responsibility for these persecutions should expect personally to bear the consequences after the cessation of hostilities.

Despite the diplomatic niceties compelling the Hungarian officials to reject these messages as "unacceptable," the Board pointed out to Swiss authorities that one significant purpose of the protests had been accomplished: the doctrine of individual responsibility in war crimes had been made known to Hungarian authorities through official channels and beyond any measure of doubt.

Warning Addressed to Germans. In the fall of 1944, as the German military suffered one reverse after another, there were indications that the surviving victims of Nazi persecution were in increasing danger of being exterminated by the Germans in last-minute acts of desperation. According to one report reaching the Board from private sources, orders had been given for the extermination of the Jews, probably numbering some 65,000, in the concentration camps of Oswiecim and Birkenau 3/ and at Naeuss. Although

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1/ See Rescue from Hungary.

2/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

3/ A report on conditions prevailing at Oswiecim and Birkenau, based upon the personal experience related by two Slovakian Jews who managed to escape from these camps as well as upon the account of a non-Jewish political internee who likewise escaped from Oswiecim, was released by the Board to the public on November 26, 1944; see document 544.

continuous efforts had been made by the Board to increase German awareness of the Allies' determination to bring to justice all war criminals, 1/ in view of this new report, the Board in October 1944 cabled its representatives in Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Italy, and Turkey, advising them of the information received and requesting that all available channels be utilized to make known to German authorities the fact that this Government was in possession of this information and further understood that the death order was personally authorized by Himmler. With direct responsibility for the proposed atrocity thus fixed, it was made clear that consequences in accordance with the declared policy of this Government would attach to all participants in the perpetration of the crime, and that this warning applied with equal force to crimes committed at other than the three specified camps. 2/

Private organizations were also informed concerning the fate menacing inmates of these camps and instructed their representatives to take all possible steps to help to save these people.

In response to this request, Minister Johnson communicated the substance of the message to the Swedish Foreign Office, which undertook to relay it to German authorities. 3/ Ambassador Norweb indicated that he had taken steps toward the same end through the Portuguese Foreign Office. 4/

Another Message Relayed by Irish and Swiss. In January 1945 the Board learned through the United States Legation at Dublin that, at the request of a member of the Dail, the Irish Government had addressed an inquiry to the German Government concerning the rumor that the Germans intended to exterminate inmates of the camps at Oswiecim and Birkenau. German authorities were alleged to have declared that the rumor was "pure invention, devoid of foundation," and that if the camps should be abandoned, the inmates would be evacuated. 5/

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- 1/ See Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.
  - 2/ Cable No. 3461 to Bern dated October 7, 1944, comprising document 391; repeated in substance on October 10 to Ankara and Lisbon, on October 11 to Stockholm, and on October 12 to Caserta.
  - 3/ Cable No. 4206 from Stockholm dated October 16, 1944, comprising document 392.
  - 4/ Cable No. 3149 from Lisbon dated October 14, 1944, comprising document 393.
  - 5/ Cable No. 9 from Dublin dated January 17, 1945, comprising document 394.



Although a somewhat similar denial had been attributed to official German circles in October of 1944, following reports given wide circulation by the Polish Government-in-Exile in London concerning mass executions at Oswiecim and Birkenau, 1/ the Board decided to use this report from Dublin as a starting point in asking the Legation there, first, to convey to the Irish Government this Government's appreciation of its humane interest in the survival of persecuted minorities and, second, to ask that the Irish Government advise German authorities that their reply to Eire had been noted and that this Government accordingly expected that Jews and other survivors of these and other camps in Germany and German-controlled territory would be kept alive by German authorities. 2/

When the Irish Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin subsequently conveyed to the Germans the Board's message on this score he was told that inmates of the camps at Oswiecim and Birkenau had been evacuated to points in the interior. 3/

At the Board's request, 4/ Representative McClelland transmitted to the Germans through Swiss channels a message similar to that which the Irish had been asked to relay. 5/

Continued Intercession by Switzerland Urged. Because of the Board's fear that the Germans, before evacuating additional areas, would undertake to exterminate surviving Jews, in January 1945 the attention of Swiss authorities was once again drawn to the danger faced by the Jewish survivors in German-controlled territory. In this connection, Board Representative McClelland was requested to refer specifically to three major concentrations of Jews known to exist in Axis territory; Lodz with 60,000 to 80,000 inmates; Theresienstadt, where there were 40,000 to 60,000 inmates; and camps in Vienna with 18,000 inmates, as well as any other localities or regions where Jews were believed to survive. The Board felt that frequent and extended visits of Swiss consuls to places and regions where Jews were concentrated constituted one of the most effective means of preventing further exterminations and

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1/ Cable No. 6818 from Bern dated October 12, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 20 to Dublin dated January 22, 1945, comprising document 395.

3/ Cable No. 26 from Dublin dated February 6, 1945, comprising document 396.

4/ Cable No. 368 to Bern dated January 22, 1945.

5/ Cable No. 520 from Bern dated January 25, 1945, comprising document 397.

pointed to the proved efficacy of this method in Budapest where, thanks to the presence of neutral personnel, many lives were saved. 1/

The Board also indicated the desirability of emphasizing the mounting evidence of confusion among local German officials and their increasing susceptibility to any psychological pressure which might be directed toward dissuading them from carrying out the extermination policies ordered by central German authorities. Representative McClelland was advised that full advantage should be taken of this state of mind, through unofficial as well as official channels, in the interest of saving lives. 2/

In response to representations made along these lines, Representative McClelland was advised by the Swiss Foreign Office that official Swiss representatives had been refused permission to visit the camps at Vienna or Theresienstadt. Moreover, it was felt that the possibility of their ever being able to do so was doubtful unless it could be established to the satisfaction of the Germans that there were persons in the camps who were legally entitled to the protection of the Swiss. Swiss authorities agreed, however, to continue their efforts in this direction. 3/

In a note later received from the Swiss it was pointed out that, although appropriate instructions concerning the desirability of protective visits had been sent to the Swiss Legation at Berlin, the situation was not as favorable as it had been in Hungary, since Swiss intercession in Germany in favor of Jews up until that time had been countenanced only with respect to persons holding Palestine certificates, United States visas, or Latin American documents. 4/

In view of the apparent impossibility of accomplishing official acts of intercession, the Board asked Representative McClelland to point out in the course of his next discussions with the Swiss the indirect influence Swiss consular officials in Germany could undoubtedly bring to bear by their very presence near places where Jews were concentrated and by such informal conversations as they could hold on the spot. 5/

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1/ Efforts were also directed toward getting the International Red Cross to send additional representatives to places where Jews were concentrated as a means of preventing further exterminations; see Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies: International Red Cross.

2/ Cable No. 127 to Bern dated January 9, 1945, comprising document 398.

3/ Cable No. 581 from Bern dated January 27, 1945, comprising document 399.

4/ Cable No. 887 from Bern dated February 8, 1945.

5/ Cable No. 677 to Bern dated February 12, 1945, comprising document 400.

Sweden Likewise Urged To Continue Intercessions. Instructions along the lines of those dispatched to Bern were later sent to Minister Johnson and Board Representative Olsen in Stockholm, asking that the Swedish Foreign Office be reminded of the Board's view that frequent and extended visits of Swedish consuls to places where Jews were concentrated presented an effective means of preventing their further extermination, as Swedish and other representation in Budapest had effectively proved. More specifically, the Board suggested the desirability of delegates of the Swedish Young Men's Christian Association and the Swedish Red Cross being stationed in or sent on extended visits to Bergen-Belsen to assist in the distribution of the large number of relief parcels that had reached this camp with their aid; representations to these organizations toward that end were proposed. Representative Olsen was further instructed to stress to Swedish authorities the reports of mounting confusion among local German officials and the desirability that full advantage of this state of mind be taken through unofficial as well as official channels. 1/

A later instruction from the Board to Minister Johnson and Representative Olsen stressed the indirect influence Swedish consular officials could undoubtedly be persuaded to bring to bear by making informal visits to places where Jews were concentrated and by such informal conversations as they could enter into with supervisory German personnel. 2/

In response to the representations made by Minister Johnson, Swedish officials were skeptical that the Germans would be receptive to Swedish suggestions in the matter. Minister Johnson was assured, however, that the Swedish Government was keenly aware of the danger of last-minute exterminations and would continue to explore every opportunity for useful action. 3/

Request of Private Agency Supported. Meanwhile the Board learned that the Swiss and Swedish Ministers in Washington, at the request of a private organization, were transmitting to their Governments requests that Switzerland and Sweden again appeal to the Germans to refrain from further extermination and persecution of the Jews remaining in German-occupied territory. In order to

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1/ Cable No. 106 to Stockholm dated January 19, 1945, comprising document 401.

2/ Cable No. 273 to Stockholm dated February 14, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 483 from Stockholm dated February 7, 1945, comprising document 402.

add weight to these requests, the Board promptly instructed Representatives McClelland and Olsen to advise Swiss and Swedish officials that this Government would welcome an appeal along such lines. 1/

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1/ Cable No. 338 to Bern and Cable No. 110 to Stockholm, both dated January 20, 1945.



III A - 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE PROGRAMS: APPROACHES TO GERMANY  
AND THE SATELLITES TO HALT PERSECUTION

APPEALS THROUGH THE VATICAN

CZECHOSLOVAKIAN DEPORTATIONS. Reports reaching the Board early in 1944 indicated that Slovakian authorities had undertaken the registration of all Jews remaining in Slovakia, presumably as a prelude to their deportation. It was said that there were some 18,000 to 20,000 Jews still in Slovakia following earlier mass arrests; the deportation of these persons was reportedly being pressed on the Slovakian regime by Germany. 1/

In view of these reports the Board felt that Slovakian authorities should be made to understand that this Government viewed most seriously and would take into account any part played by them in the deportation or other persecution of Jews in Slovakia. Accordingly, as one means of accomplishing this objective, 2/ a memorandum was addressed to the State Department on February 15, 1944, suggesting that, since Dr. Josef Tiso, President of Slovakia, was a Roman Catholic priest, the good offices of the Vatican might properly and profitably be sought as a means of communicating the views of this Government to Dr. Tiso.

Assurances Asked of Slovak Authorities. In response to this request the State Department on February 21, 1944, addressed a letter to Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, asking him to present to the Holy See the Board's request that efforts be made to persuade Dr. Tiso and his associates to refrain from further aiding and abetting the Nazis in their persecution of the Jews. The Holy See was also asked to advise the Government of Slovakia of this Government's serious view of their collaboration in Hitler's persecution of Jews and of the certainty that their conduct would be taken into account by this Government in the future. It was also suggested that the Holy See might wish to express its own views of the subject to Dr. Tiso. 3/

1/ See Rescue from Czechoslovakia.

2/ See also Appeals through Neutral Countries and Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

3/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate from the State Department dated February 21, 1944, comprising document 403.

The Apostolic Delegate subsequently indicated that, prior to the receipt of the Board's request, the Apostolic Nunciature in Bratislava had already been instructed by the Vatican to concern itself with the condition of Jews in Slovakia. Following investigations of the situation and discussions with Slovak officials, the papal representative in Bratislava had advised the Vatican that the census of Jews taken in Slovakia "had only one purpose, the investigation of certain specific suspicions. Furthermore, according to a promise from the President of the Republic, Dr. Josef Tiso, the Jews will not be persecuted, that is, will not be condemned to severe punishments, but will only be interned and will be given opportunity and facilities to withdraw to some other country." 1/

Inasmuch as this response contained no real assurance that Jews in Slovakia would not be deported, the Board in a letter dated April 3, 1944, asked the Apostolic Delegate to attempt to obtain from Dr. Tiso and his associates more adequate assurances that Jews in Slovakia would not be persecuted or removed to Germany or German-occupied territory. 2/

The Apostolic Delegate in turn communicated this request to the Vatican, which agreed to make efforts to obtain the assurances requested. Meanwhile, a special representative was named by the Vatican to act as an observer on the situation in Slovakia. 3/

Slovak Assurances Obtained. Toward the end of May 1944 the Board was advised that competent civil authorities in Slovakia had given assurances to the Apostolic Nunciature in Slovakia that, despite the registration of Jews, Slovakian officials had no intention of taking any other anti-semitic measures. While the Apostolic Nunciature in its previous report had been inclined to accept without reservation the assurances received, in the report relayed in May 1944 the Nunciature added that, despite Slovakian assurances, the possibility of new reprisals could not be excluded. 4/

Slovakian Assurances Proved Meaningless. Thus when word reached the Board in September 1944 to the effect that the authorities in Slovakia had resumed the forced deportation of Jews, these developments were not altogether unexpected. In the hope that energetic and immediate use of Vatican influence on the Tiso government could help

- 1/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated February 26, 1944, comprising document 404.
- 2/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated April 3, 1944, comprising document 405.
- 3/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated April 25, 1944, comprising document 406.
- 4/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated May 24, 1944, comprising document 407.

alleviate the situation, word was sent from Bern to Board Representative Ackermann in Italy, asking that he discuss with Myron Taylor, Presidential Representative at the Vatican, the possibility of direct Vatican intervention. Board Representative Ackermann was also advised of a report that Slovak Minister Sidor was at that time still at the Vatican, through which he presumably hoped to secure protection after the war. It was felt that advantage might be taken of Minister Sidor's presence in bringing pressure to bear on the quiescent Slovak Government. 1/

In Washington the Board meanwhile suggested to the Apostolic Delegate that the Holy See might find it appropriate to reiterate to Dr. Tiso and his associates, through Minister Sidor or otherwise, the seriousness with which this Government viewed the tragic new developments in Slovakia, as well as this Government's intention to take into account in the future any part played by Dr. Tiso or his associates. 2/

Although the Apostolic Delegate was not optimistic over what might be accomplished by Vatican intercession, particularly in view of the inability of Vatican representatives in the past to obtain any positive results in dealing with German authorities in similar situations, 3/ continued Vatican representations were made. 4/

According to word subsequently received by the Vatican from Bratislava, following these representations the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that he had protested to the German Legation in Bratislava against the impending deportations, since Slovakian Jews were entitled to protection under the constitution and laws of Slovakia. In transmitting this information, the Apostolic Delegate in Washington added that he had also been advised that the Board's message for Dr. Tiso had been duly transmitted to the Nunciature in Bratislava. 5/

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- 1/ Cable from Bern to Rome dated September 15, 1944; repeated on the same date to the Board as Cable No. 6083 from Bern.
  - 2/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated September 21, 1944, comprising document 408.
  - 3/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated September 23, 1944, comprising document 409.
  - 4/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated October 2, 1944, comprising document 410.
  - 5/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated October 14, 1944, comprising document 411.

In November 1944 the Apostolic Nunciature in Bratislava was directed by the Vatican to insist anew with President Tiso that he fulfill the obligations incumbent upon him as a priest by acting to protect the rights of Jews in Slovakia and to assure them of just and equitable treatment. 1/

Despite these and other efforts to help stay the threatened Slovakian deportations over a period of months, toward the end of 1944 wholesale arrests occurred throughout Slovakian territory. Several thousand Jews were concentrated at the camp of Sered, from which deportations were begun. Other Jews holding American and Latin American passports were assembled at the camp of Marianka near Bratislava. 2/

Following receipt by the Board of information indicating that the deportation of these individuals claiming the nationality of American republics had likewise begun, contrary to assurances previously given Swiss authorities by the Germans, the Board asked the Vatican to attempt to obtain through the Nunciature at Bratislava or through other channels any information that might be available with respect to persons in this category, but Vatican sources were unable to obtain the desired information. 3/

The Holy See later renewed its appeals to the Slovakian Government that the Jews in Slovakia be treated in a humane and Christian manner, expressing regret that the removal of Jews should have occurred contrary to assurances previously given. The Slovakian Legation at the Vatican was likewise approached. 4/

HUNGARIAN AND RUMANIAN PERSECUTIONS. According to countless reports received by the Board, Jews and other innocent minorities in Hungary and Rumania were likewise the objects of especially brutal persecution at the hands of German and satellite authorities. 5/ Thus, as another step toward persuading Germany and the satellite nations to halt such persecution, the Board on March 24, 1944, transmitted to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington a copy of the statement issued by President Roosevelt concerning the intentions of this Government with respect to punishing those guilty of such persecution. The Apostolic Delegate was asked to suggest to the Holy See

1/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated November 14, 1944, comprising document 412.

2/ See Rescue from Czechoslovakia.

3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

4/ Cable No. 393 from Vatican City dated December 1, 1944, comprising document 413.

5/ See also Rescue from Hungary and Rescue from Rumania.



that action on its part might facilitate the adoption of measures by the people and Governments of Hungary and Rumania to protect the Jewish population of those countries. 1/

The Board was subsequently advised that the Holy See, through the Apostolic Nuncios in Bucharest and Budapest, was making insistent recommendations in the hope of alleviating the brutal treatment being meted out to Jews in the Balkans. 2/

Reports on Hungarian Situation Relayed to Vatican. In May 1944, at the instigation of the Board, a formal message calling attention to certain exceedingly disquieting information with respect to the Hungarian situation was dispatched by this Government to the Cardinal Secretary of State. 3/ Following reference to the common concern of the American people and of the Holy See over "the wave of hate which has engulfed Europe and the consequent mass persecution, enslavement, deportation and slaughter of helpless men, women and children," this message called to the attention of the Holy See recent reports that authorities in Hungary were planning to slaughter the 800,000 Jews in that country. The message went on to indicate that while this Government had warned the authorities and the people of Hungary of the material consequences that would follow the perpetration of such inhumane acts, it was considered both timely and fitting that they also be reminded of the moral values involved. In view of the great numbers of persons in Hungary professing adherence to the Roman Catholic Church, it was hoped that the Holy See would bring its influence to bear upon the situation by making some pronouncement either directly or through the Nuncio and clergy in Hungary. Another proposal advanced was that the Holy See send additional representation into Hungary for informational purposes as well as for the moral influence such representation would have.

Delivery of this formal communication to the Vatican was finally accomplished on June 24, 1944. 4/

- 1/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated March 24, 1944, comprising document 414.
- 2/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated March 31, 1944, comprising document 415; see also Cable No. 2268 from Bern dated April 12, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 1819 to Bern dated May 26, 1944, comprising document 416 repeated to American representative Harold Tittmann in Naples on June 13, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 300 from Naples dated June 28, 1944.

The cooperation of the Vatican in forwarding such information as it was possible to obtain on further developments in Hungary was also solicited, both through the Apostolic Delegate in Washington and through American representative Harold Tittmann at Vatican City. 1/

Pope Addressed Appeal to Hungarian Regent. Following the receipt of these formal requests, the Vatican not only sent extra representation into Hungary to help aid and protect the persecuted, but on June 25, 1944, the Pope addressed a note to Hungarian Regent Horthy, voicing a personal appeal "that the Regent do everything possible in favor of the many unfortunate persons . . . suffering because of their race or nationality." In response to this appeal, the Hungarian Regent was said to have declared that he would do everything in his power to cause the demands of humanitarian and Christian principles to prevail.

The Apostolic Delegate, in advising the Board of these actions, concluded with the assurance that "the Holy Father personally, the Holy See and its Representatives throughout Europe will continue to take every possible measure to lessen and to impede the persecution of the Jewish people." 2/

A few weeks later the Apostolic Delegate informed the Board that, according to word received from Budapest, this appeal on the part of the Holy See had led Hungarian Regent Horthy to assume "a more determined attitude of opposition to the racial laws." The Hungarian Government was also said to have assured Cardinal Seredi, Primate of Hungary, that the Jewish deportations would cease. Members of the Catholic hierarchy in Hungary meanwhile were encouraged to carry on "a more intense activity in favor of victims of racial laws." 3/

For a while following these assurances there were indications that deportation as a policy had, in fact, been abandoned. By September 1944, according to word received from the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, the situation among the Jews of Hungary showed considerable improvement. 4/

In October 1944, however, the 200,000 to 300,000 Jews remaining in Budapest and other parts of Hungary under German control were

1/ Cable No. 1785 to Bern dated May 23, 1944.

2/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated July 7, 1944, comprising document 417 ; see also letter to the Apostolic Delegate of the same date.

3/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated July 24, 1944, comprising document 418.

4/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated September 25, 1944.

once again threatened with deportation. Although the situation in those areas was such that it seemed unlikely that approaches to the Hungarian authorities would have any beneficial effect, the Board felt that a public appeal broadcast by the Holy See to the people and clergy of Hungary, urging that they aid in the temporary concealment of Jews and that they oppose deportation and extermination measures, might well save many lives. This suggestion was transmitted in a letter to the Apostolic Delegate under date of October 20, 1944. 1/

Although the Board was never advised that an appeal along these lines had been made, it was informed that the Holy See, taking advantage of a day set aside by Cardinal Seredi as a day of prayer for refugees in Hungary, addressed an open message to the Cardinal manifesting "his heartfelt interest in promoting the welfare of all those who are exposed to violence and persecution because of their race or religion or on account of political motives." 2/

- 1/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated October 20, 1944, comprising document 419; see also Cable No. 55 to Rome dated October 25, 1944.
- 2/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated November 4, 1944, comprising document 420.

III B. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE PROGRAMS: STATEMENTS AND INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGNS INSPIRED BY THE BOARD

One essential feature of the Board's program was to convince the governments and the people of Germany and the satellite countries that this Government and other members of the United Nations viewed most seriously the persecutions inflicted by the enemy and were determined to see to it that those responsible would be punished. A program of this character, the Board felt, offered the best potentialities for saving hundreds of thousands of lives, since time was short and the number of persons the Board could reasonably hope to rescue despite the attitude of the enemy obviously could not be compared with the far greater number which might be saved from death by changing the attitude of enemy and satellite governments.

Board's Opinion Sought. Shortly after the Board was set up and before there had been time to formulate or publicize statements along these lines, the State Department under date of February 5, 1944, forwarded to the Board a copy of a message from the British Foreign Office to the British Embassy in Washington on the question of the proposed issuance of a new declaration concerning Hitler's policy of exterminating the Jews.<sup>1/</sup> Having been pressed by officers of the World Jewish Congress in London to issue such a declaration, the British proposed to decline, mainly on the ground that the United Nations Declaration, issued in December 1942, had been a sufficient statement of policy in this respect.<sup>2/</sup> The British first

<sup>1/</sup> Letter from the State Department to the Board dated February 5, 1944 (enclosing copy of cable to the British Embassy from the British Foreign Office dated January 25, 1944), comprising document 421.

<sup>2/</sup> This declaration strongly condemned the bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination of the Jewish race and reaffirmed the solemn resolution of the United Nations "to insure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end." See document 422.



sought the views of this Government on the subject, however, in the hope that the United States would support the action proposed and despite their expectation that this Government would be subject to pressure "in an election year."

In response to the State Department's request for the opinion of the Board in the matter, the Board promptly indicated its feeling that effective psychological warfare involved not only the making of appropriate statements and representations, but also making them under such circumstances as would convince the leaders and people in enemy countries of this Government's firm determination to match words with action.<sup>1/</sup> If it was a fact that, as the British stated, there was little evidence that the 1942 declaration perceptibly lessened the persecution of the Jews, the Board pointed out that the question then arose as to whether this declaration had been issued under such circumstances and had been given such publicity in the enemy countries as to maximize the effectiveness of what was said in the declaration. In this connection, the Board asserted, it should be borne in mind that the 1942 declaration was issued at a time when Germany and her satellites had high hopes for victory. A declaration issued at a time when the enemy felt the war to be lost had potentialities so great that it could hardly be compared with the declaration issued in 1942.

With respect to the statement on the punishment of atrocities issued on November 1, 1943, following the Moscow Conference,<sup>2/</sup> to which reference had also been made, the Board felt that there was merit in the contention attributed to World Jewish Congress officials that had this declaration specifically mentioned atrocities against the Jews, Hitler and his cohorts might have been more convinced of the attitude of the Allies on their treatment of these

1/ Letter to the State Department from the Board dated February 11, 1944, comprising document 423.

2/ This statement, one of a series of declarations issued at the conclusion of the Conference of Foreign Secretaries of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union held at Moscow in October 1943, solemnly warned that those German officers and men and members of the Nazi party who had had any connection with atrocities or executions in countries overrun by German forces would be taken back to the countries in which their crimes were committed, to be charged and punished according to the laws of those countries. This declaration was "without prejudice to the case of the major criminals, whose offences have no particular geographical localisation and who will be punished by the joint decision of the Governments of the Allies." See document 424.

people. In this connection, it was noted that the British themselves placed chief reliance on the earlier United Nations Declaration rather than that issued from Moscow. In view of the fact that Hitler had always especially singled out the Jews, there was much to be said for the belief that any statement which omitted specific reference to the Jews lost much of its effectiveness in Germany and the satellite countries by reason of the omission.

A proposed letter to the British along these lines was therefore forwarded to the State Department along with the Board's reply. This letter, subsequently delivered to the British Embassy, concluded with a statement to the effect that the issuance of a new declaration was, in fact, under active consideration by the Board.1/

President's Statement on Atrocities. Shortly thereafter, on March 24, 1944, such a statement was issued by President Roosevelt. It read:

"The United Nations are fighting to make a world in which tyranny and aggression can not exist; a world based upon freedom, equality and justice; a world in which all persons regardless of race, color or creed may live in peace, honor and dignity.

"In the meantime in most of Europe and in parts of Asia the systematic torture and murder of civilians -- men, women and children -- by the Nazis and the Japanese continue unabated. In areas subjugated by the aggressors innocent Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Dutch, Danes, French, Greeks, Russians, Chinese, Filipinos -- and many others -- are being starved or frozen to death or murdered in cold blood in a campaign of savagery.

"The slaughters of Warsaw, Lidice, Kharkov and Nanking -- the brutal torture and murder by the Japanese, not only of civilians but of our own gallant American soldiers and fliers -- these are startling examples of what goes on day by day, year in and year out, wherever the Nazis and the Japs are in military control -- free to follow their barbaric purpose.

"In one of the blackest crimes of all history -- begun by the Nazis in the day of peace and multiplied by them a hundred

1/ Letter to the British Embassy from the Board dated February 25, 1944.

times in time of war -- the wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe goes on unabated every hour. As a result of the events of the last few days hundreds of thousands of Jews, who while living under persecution have at least found a haven from death in Hungary and the Balkans, are now threatened with annihilation as Hitler's forces descend more heavily upon these lands. That these innocent people, who have already survived a decade of Hitler's fury, should perish on the very eve of triumph over the barbarism which their persecution symbolizes, would be a major tragedy.

"It is therefore fitting that we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in these acts of savagery shall go unpunished. The United Nations have made it clear that they will pursue the guilty and deliver them up in order that Justice be done. That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries. All who knowingly take part in the deportation of Jews to their death in Poland or Norwegians and French to their death in Germany are equally guilty with the executioner. All who share the guilt shall share the punishment.

"Hitler is committing these crimes against humanity in the name of the German people. I ask every German and every man everywhere under Nazi domination to show the world by his action that in his heart he does not share these insane criminal desires. Let him hide these pursued victims, help them to get over their borders, and do what he can to save them from the Nazi hangman. I ask him to also keep watch, and to record the evidence that will one day be used to convict the guilty.

"In the meantime, and until the victory that is now assured is won, the United States will persevere in its efforts to rescue the victims of brutality of the Nazis and the Japs. In so far as the necessity of military operations permit this Government will use all means at its command to aid the escape of all intended victims of the Nazi and Jap executioner -- regardless of race or religion or color. We call upon the free peoples of Europe and Asia temporarily to open their frontiers to all victims of oppression. We shall find havens of refuge for them, and we shall find the means for their maintenance and support until the tyrant is driven from their homelands and they may return.

"In the name of justice and humanity let all freedom-loving people rally to this righteous undertaking."

Widespread Publicity Accorded Statement. Since the effectiveness of the President's statement depended largely upon the extent



to which it was publicized in German-controlled Europe, the Board immediately cabled key United States Missions abroad, requesting that the utmost publicity be given it in local newspapers, over the radio, and in any other manner feasible.<sup>1/</sup> Wide coverage of the statement by neutral radio stations was thus obtained over a period of many weeks. Facilities of the Office of War Information, both in this country and abroad, also were fully employed in publicizing the statement in French, German, Italian, and other languages as well as English.

The text of the President's statement was likewise made available to representatives in London of the various governments-in-exile, and United States Missions in Latin American countries were similarly informed.

Newspapers throughout Europe subsequently carried news of the statement; editorials praising the President's sentiments were also reported.<sup>2/</sup> Ambassador Steinhardt, in advising the Board of wide publicity in the Turkish and Balkan press, added that the statement apparently made a deep impression on the people of the Balkans and central European countries.<sup>3/</sup>

Tracts on the statement were not only clandestinely printed and relayed through underground channels into enemy territory but were also dropped from the air over Hungary and other satellite countries and thus undoubtedly came to the attention of occupation authorities.<sup>4/</sup>

British Declaration. On March 30, 1944, Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in response to a question asked in the House of Commons as to whether or not the British Government had any statement to make with reference to the peril threatening Jews in the Balkans, declared that the President's

1/ Cable No. 991 to Bern dated March 24, 1944, comprising document 425 ; repeated on the same date to London, Moscow, Stockholm, Lisbon, Madrid, Ankara, Algiers, and Cairo.

2/ See, for example, Cable No. 1853 from Bern dated March 25, 1944; Cables No. 905 and 973 from Lisbon dated March 26 and April 1, 1944; and Dispatch No. 343 from Lisbon dated March 31, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 568 from Ankara dated March 29, 1944.

4/ Cables No. 1236 and 1345 from Stockholm dated April 11 and 18, 1944.



statement had the wholehearted approval of His Majesty's Government. Mr. Eden went on to make the following declaration on behalf of the British Government:1/

"Evidence continues to reach His Majesty's Government and, I understand, Allied Governments that the Nazi policy of extermination has not been halted. The persecution of the Jews has in particular been of unexampled horror and intensity. On this His Majesty's Government in common with their Allies, now that the hour of Germany's defeat grows ever nearer and more certain, can only repeat their detestation of Germany's crimes and their determination that all those guilty of them shall be brought to Justice. But apart from direct guilt there is still indirect participation in crime. Satellite governments who expel citizens to destinations named by Berlin must know that such actions are tantamount to assisting in inhuman persecution and slaughter. This will not be forgotten when the inevitable defeat of the arch enemy of Europe comes about.

"Happily there are individuals and even official authorities among the satellites who have resisted the evil German example and have shown toleration and mercy. These things are known to the Allies and in the hope of encouraging such good deeds and increasing their number His Majesty's Government are concerned to make it clear that those who have followed the right path will also not be forgotten in the day of final reckoning. The time of respite is short but there is still opportunity for the merciful to multiply their acts of humanity, for the guilty to try to make amends for their deeds of shame by releasing their victims and making so far as is possible restitution to them. His Majesty's Government are confident that they are expressing the sentiments of all the Allied Governments in calling upon all the countries allied with or subject to Germany to join in preventing further persecution and cooperate in protecting and saving the innocent. His Majesty's Government for their part are firmly resolved to continue in cooperation with all Governments and private authorities concerned to rescue and maintain so far as lies in their power all those menaced by the Nazi terror."

Both the President's statement and the British declaration were reported fully in all languages by the British Broadcasting Company in broadcasts to enemy and occupied territories and to the satellite countries.2/

1/ Cables No. 2647 and 2831 from London dated March 31 and April 6, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 2831 from London dated April 6, 1944.

Effort Made To Elicit Soviet Statement. Upon the Board's request, Ambassador Harriman in Moscow spoke with Soviet officials about the President's statement and in general terms solicited Soviet cooperation with the Board's psychological program.1/

Ambassador Harriman subsequently approached Soviet authorities in an effort to ascertain whether, in view of the positive action taken by both the United States and British Governments in reiterating their attitude toward Nazi war crimes and atrocities, the Soviet Government would take similar action. The Board felt that such a statement on the part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would have a profound effect upon the leaders and people of Rumania and Hungary.2/

Soviet action in the matter, however, was not obtained.

Campaign To Halt Hungarian Deportations. In May, 1944, upon being informed that the long-feared deportations from Hungary had begun,3/ the Board immediately made arrangements to have warnings to the Germans carried by Office of War Information transmitters in their foreign broadcasts. In accordance with the Board's request, the British Broadcasting Company also made such broadcasts to Hungary.4/

German and satellite military and civilian personnel carrying out deportation proceedings were repeatedly warned that they personally would be held responsible by the United Nations for their actions and for any deaths resulting from such deportations. The Soviet and British Foreign Offices also were urged to use their influence upon the satellite governments and populations toward increasing resistance to German demands for the deportation and persecutions of minority groups under satellite control.5/

Prominent Americans Voiced Appeal. On May 25, 1944, a statement was addressed to President Roosevelt and to the other Allied Governments by a group of 73 prominent Christian Americans headed

1/ Cable No. 1083 from Moscow dated March 28, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 937 to Moscow dated April 17, 1944, and Cable No. 2152 from Moscow dated June 14, 1944.

3/ See Rescue from Hungary.

4/ Cable No. 4205 from London dated May 25, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 3934 to London dated May 17, 1944, comprising document 426 ; repeated on the same date to Moscow.

by the late Alfred E. Smith, calling upon the Allied Nations to repeat their warnings to the Nazis and their satellites. This appeal, which was signed by the Governors of 18 States as well as by members of Congress, educators, clergymen, businessmen, labor leaders, and authors, declared temporary havens for refugees in this country to be a "moral obligation." The statement continued:1/

"Furthermore, it is our belief that the people marked for death must be informed that they have friends among the free nations of the world. By word and by concrete act, the American people and their allies must let them know that there are hearts that understand their sufferings and hands that are eager to help them. If they are convinced that the free and democratic peoples recognize them as brothers under God, it will give them hope and the courage to use every means within reach to escape Hitler's torture chambers and death traps.

"For those reasons we endorse the idea of establishing in this country temporary havens of refuge for those who are brought out of Europe by the War Refugee Board. It is a moral obligation of the United States and all other freedom-loving nations to erect temporary havens where the refugees may find sanctuary until conditions in their native lands enable them to return and take up their lives in the atmosphere of respect and decency and charity that our certain victory will create."

This statement likewise was given wide coverage throughout the world.

Statement by Senate Foreign Relations Committee. On May 31, 1944, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued a stirring statement addressed to the people of Hungary, asking them to use every means possible to protect the lives of their fellow citizens of the Jewish faith. This statement, similarly publicized, read:

"The people of the United States and all freedom-loving peoples are horrified by the news that Hitler has designated the 800,000 Jews in Hungary for death.

"That the people of Hungary should countenance the cold-blooded murder of innocent men, women and children is unthinkable. Once Hungary was the haven of tens of

thousands who fled the Nazi terror in other lands. Once Hungary protected the helpless who sought refuge within its borders. Once Hungarians shielded their Jewish fellow-citizens. But now the Hungarian puppet government has joined the Nazis in their ruthless determination to do away with the Jews.

"While there is yet time the people of Hungary can demonstrate to the world that this unholy scheme is a betrayal of the true Hungarian spirit. They can hide the Jews until such time as they may help them to safety across the borders. They can refuse to purchase property stolen from the Jews. They can use every means to obstruct the Nazis and those Hungarians who are in league with the Nazis. They can keep watch and remember those who are accessories to murder and those who extend mercy, until the time when guilt and innocence will weigh heavily in the balance. That time is near."

Spellman Statement Directed to Hungarians. On June 13, 1944, Archbishop Francis J. Spellman of New York, in an unprecedented move, issued a strong statement designed for dissemination in Hungary as a basic part of the Board's psychological warfare campaign. Archbishop Spellman's statement, inspired by Board request, read in part:

"This announcement /of Hungary's adoption of discriminatory laws against the Jewish people/ has shocked all men and women who cherish a sense of justice and of human sympathy. It is in direct contradiction of the doctrines of the Catholic Faith professed by the vast majority of Hungarian people. It is a negation of the noblest pages of Hungarian history and cultural tradition.....

"It seems incredible, therefore, that a nation which has been so consistently true to the impulses of human kindness and the teachings of the Catholic Church should now yield to a false, pagan code of tyranny because of blood and race. How can men of good will fail to heed those solemn words of Pope Pius XI: 'Abraham is called our patriarch, our ancestor. Anti-Semitism is not compatible with the sublime reality of this text. It is a movement in which we Christians cannot share. Spiritually we are Semites.'

"One of the great lessons to be learned from the life of Hungary's king and Patron Saint is that no minority should be oppressed. For injustices of whatever kind can wreck and destroy the integrity of any nation's life.



"Nearly a thousand years ago, St. Stephen, King of Hungary, received his crown from Pope Sylvester II. He realized that Hungary was destined by the very exigencies of geography to be the crossroads of Europe where diverse racial stocks would necessarily meet. St. Stephen pledged himself and his people to live as common children of a loving mother country.

"The same saintly national hero dreamed always of Hungary as a 'regnum Marianum,' as a realm of Mary. To this day, the coinage and the postage stamps of the country bear the figure of Mary, the Mother of Mankind. It would be all the more tragic, therefore, if a people so devoted to Mary, the Jewish Maiden who was the Mother of the Messiah, should freely countenance cruel laws calculated to despoil and annihilate the race from which Jesus and Mary sprang.

"It is incredible that a people with such profound Christian faith, with its glorious history, with the oldest parliamentary tradition on the Continent, would join in a hymn of hatred and willingly submit to the blood lust and brigandage of tyranny.

"No man can love God and hate his brother. No one who hates his brother can be a faithful follower of the gentle Christ."

This statement was shortwaved by the Office of War Information to appropriate areas and was also widely covered by neutral European stations following Board representations toward that end.1/

In addition to newspaper and radio coverage afforded the statement throughout Europe,2/ at the request of the head of the Catholic Church in Switzerland the statement was read from Catholic pulpits all over that country. The statement was also given to the clandestine press and dropped from the air over Hungary.3/

1/ Cable No. 2215 to Bern dated June 29, 1944, comprising document 427.

2/ Cable No. 2002 from Ankara dated July 3, 1944, and Cable No. 2076 from Lisbon dated July 5, 1944.

3/ Cable No. 4524 from Bern dated July 15, 1944.

House of Representatives Resolution Addressed to Turkey. On June 23, 1944, a resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. This resolution called upon the Secretary of State to urge that the Government of Turkey "in the interests of humanity facilitate the entry into Turkey of refugees who can escape from the Nazis, and establish in Turkey a refugee camp in which such persons can be temporarily sheltered." 1/

Upon learning of this resolution, however, Board Representative Hirschmann cabled that, in view of the cooperation being obtained from the Turkish Government, any publicity on the Bloom resolution, either in Turkey or the United States, would actually be harmful. On the matter of the proposed establishment of a refugee camp in Turkey, Board Representative Hirschmann pointed out that up until that time transportation to Palestine had been promptly arranged for all refugees managing to reach Turkey from the Balkans. Even if such transit facilities should break down, Representative Hirschmann pointed out that the absorptive capacity of the Jewish community of Istanbul would undoubtedly be adequate for temporary refuge. 2/

Statement of Members of House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Later in June 1944 Executive Director Pehle met with the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, in executive session, to summarize activities and objectives of the Board. Following this meeting, on June 28, 1944, members of the Committee prepared and signed a statement deploring the plight of European war refugees and approving the activities of the Board. This statement, which was addressed to all Nazi-controlled territories but to Hungary in particular, read:

"Resolved, That the House of Representatives hereby expresses its deep concern over the plight of the threatened millions of Nazi-occupied and Nazi-dominated territories. The House of Representatives expresses its approval of the activities of the War Refugee Board, which is facilitating the actual rescue of persons so exposed, furnishing relief to such persons by making available food and other supplies, and attempting to influence through psychological and other measures the attitudes of both the leaders and rank and file population in those territories where extermination of minority groups is imminent, and be it further

1/ Cable No. 583 to Ankara dated June 29, 1944, comprising document 428; repeated on the same date to London, Stockholm, Madrid, Bern, and Lisbon.

2/ Cable No. 2010 from Ankara dated July 3, 1944.

"Resolved, That the House of Representatives is not content merely to join with those who have expressed their horror at the barbarism of the governments involved in the cruelties herein condemned, but hereby expresses its determination that the criminals who are guilty of this inhuman conduct shall be brought to justice, and hereby requests the Secretary of State to convey, through such means as he may find appropriate, this concern and determination of the House of Representatives. This concern and determination, while addressed to all Nazi-controlled territories, is particularly directed to Hungary, where the lives of a million Jews hang in the balance. At this historic moment, when the tide of military battle has turned decisively in favor of the United Nations, the House of Representatives of the United States of America calls upon the Nazis and all their satellites to stem the tide of inhumanity toward helpless peoples."

The text of this statement was promptly communicated to Board representatives in key United States Missions abroad for transmission to appropriate authorities in Great Britain and the neutral countries.<sup>1/</sup> As in the past, Office of War Information facilities were helpfully enlisted in publicizing the statement. The Swiss press, in particular, published it widely and arrangements were made for its transmission to Hungary.<sup>2/</sup>

Nazi Atrocities in Hungary Denounced by Secretary Hull. At his radio and press conference on June 26, 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull acclaimed the resolution of the House Committee asserting that there could not be too many protests against the wholesale murder practiced by the Nazis. Secretary Hull reiterated this Government's intention of seeing to it that those guilty of such inhuman conduct would be fittingly punished.

In the course of his radio and press conference a short time later, Secretary Hull issued a new denunciation of the threatened extermination of the Jews in Hungary. In a prepared statement dated July 14, 1944, Secretary Hull declared:

1/ Circular Cable to London, Ankara, Madrid, Lisbon, Stockholm, and Bern dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 429.

2/ Cable No. 4390 from Bern dated July 10, 1944.

"The number of victims of these fiendish crimes is great. The entire Jewish community in Hungary, which numbered nearly 1,000,000 souls, is threatened with extermination.

"The horror and indignation felt by the American people at these cold-blooded tortures and massacres has been voiced by the President, by the Congress and by hundreds of private organizations throughout the country. It is shared by all the civilized nations of the world.

"This Government will not slacken its efforts to rescue as many of these unfortunate people as can be saved from persecutions and death.

"The puppet Hungarian Government, by its violation of the most elementary human rights and by its servile adoption of the worst features of the Nazi 'racial policy' stands condemned before history.

"It may be futile to appeal to the humanity of the instigators or perpetrators of such outrages. Let them know that they cannot escape the inexorable punishment which will be meted out to them when the power of the evil men now in control of Hungary has been broken."

Hull Statement on Distomo Murders. In the course of this conference Secretary Hull pointed to the cold-blooded murder of the population of Distomo in Greece as "another shocking example of the reign of terror which the Nazis have introduced in Europe and which becomes more savage as they become more desperate."1/

Declaration by Hungarians in the United States. In July, 1944, the Board relayed to key United States Missions abroad a declaration made by Hungarians currently living in the United States, solemnly warning every Hungarian "from the highest to the lowest" perpetrating or serving as an accessory to crimes against minority peoples "that he will have to bear full responsibility for his acts and will not be permitted to invoke as an extenuating circumstance the fact that he has only carried out orders of a superior authority." The declaration ended with an appeal to all true Hungarians to extend all possible assistance to their persecuted and tortured fellow countrymen.2/

1/ See Rescue from Greece.

2/ Circular Cable to Stockholm, Lisbon, Madrid, Cairo, and Naples dated July 15, 1944, comprising document 430.



Minorities Further Threatened by German Retreat in Baltic. Reports of the slaughter by the Germans of thousands of Jews in the path of their retreat through the Baltic states in the summer of 1944 brought about an intensification of the Board's psychological warfare program. Despite the high hopes engendered by a promising military situation, there was every reason to believe that the German army and the guilt-ridden Gestapo would use their waning power to consummate Hitler's threat to make Europe Judenrein. To forestall this possibility, the Board asked the Office of War Information to renew broadcasts warning the Nazis that they would be held accountable for their crimes and pointing out that the Government and people of the United States, shocked by the brutality of such incidents as the sinking of the "Merkura,"<sup>1/</sup> were determined to seek out and exact the full penalty from those responsible for such outrages.

At the Board's suggestion, appeals were also beamed to the French underground, asking the maquis to make a special effort to protect the thousands of helpless men, women, and children confined in concentration camps in France. The Office of War Information likewise continued the broadcasting of messages to partisans in the Low Countries, in Czechoslovakia, and in Poland, urging them to do everything possible to frustrate the Nazi plan to exterminate their Jewish compatriots.

Hull Statement on Polish Atrocities. On October 10, 1944, Secretary Hull issued the following statement concerning the threatened extermination of additional thousands in Poland:

"The United States Government has been informed by the Polish Government that it had received reliable information that German officials in Poland are making plans for the extermination of tens of thousands of innocent persons, Polish citizens and other nationals of the United Nations, and Jewish deportees from areas under German control in Europe in the concentration camps at Brzezinski and Oswiecim. The United States Government takes this occasion to warn again the German Government and Nazi officials that, if these plans are carried out, those guilty of such murderous acts will be brought to justice and pay the penalty for their heinous crimes."

This statement, like those previously made by Secretary Hull, was widely publicized both here and abroad.<sup>2/</sup>

1/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ State Department Radio Bulletin dated October 10, 1944.

Governor Dewey's Statement on Nazi Atrocities. On October 19, 1944, Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York Republican Candidate for the Presidency, issued the following statement:

"Information comes to this country from unquestionably reliable sources that the Nazis, trapped and knowing that they are faced with inevitable defeat, are now resorting to the known gangster terror device of threatening to exterminate their very victims -- Poles, Jews and other non-German nationals -- now imprisoned by them in their horrible concentration camps in parts of Poland and other countries still occupied by the Nazis.

"The civilized world is now in a position in unmistakable terms to warn the Nazis -- military commanders, members of the German Government, their aiders, abettors and supporters -- that certain and inevitable justice awaits them for these brutal and wanton murders if their schemes should be carried out.

"I am happy to note that our State Department has issued a warning that 'if these plans are carried out those guilty of such murderous acts will be brought to justice and pay the penalty for their heinous crimes' American public opinion will fully support the statement issued by our Department of State."

The Board promptly relayed this statement to Board representatives abroad, urging the widest possible dissemination in order to leave no doubt as to the solidarity of the American people, even in the midst of an election for the Presidency, in their condemnation of Nazi atrocities.<sup>1/</sup>

New Reign of Terror Reported. During October, 1944, persons in close touch with the situation in Germany and German-occupied areas and in a position to evaluate the psychological effect of the steady progress of the Allied armies expressed growing apprehension for the fate of the civilians subject to the frenzy of the Nazis. Board Representative McClelland reported that trustworthy reports reaching Switzerland from Germany told of a new reign of terror, with arrests, executions and suicides among foreign prisoners and on an unprecedented scale among the German people themselves. Increased Nazi ruthlessness, particularly the growing violence

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 3618 to Bern dated October 24, 1944, comprising document 43; repeated on the same date to Ankara, Stockholm, Lisbon, Madrid, and London.

against foreigners, pointed to the alarming possibility that at least two million persons were threatened with death -- men and women of all nationalities, races, and faiths confined in Nazi prisons and concentration camps.

It was felt that many of these people undoubtedly represented valuable political and social elements in their respective countries, and apart from the human considerations involved, their loss would immeasurably retard the reconstruction of Europe. Prompted by this as well as humanitarian considerations, Board Representative McClelland strongly recommended that a concerted and powerful warning be addressed to the Germans in the name of every Allied country whose nationals were concerned.1/

The Board advised Board Representative McClelland that it had for some time been considering an approach along the lines of his suggestions.2/

Germans Warned in Eisenhower Statement. Throughout its existence the Board was repeatedly urged by private agencies to arrange for additional statements by President Roosevelt and by military authorities warning the Germans against the persecution and extermination of persons held in forced-labor battalions and in concentration camps. In the belief that a warning by military authorities would to some extent inhibit Nazi ruthlessness and at the same time carry more weight than a pronouncement which might be interpreted as a political gesture, the Board drafted a proposed statement for issuance by General Eisenhower.

As a result of these efforts and after clearance with the appropriate Allied military authorities, the following warning to the German people was issued by General Eisenhower on November 7, 1944:

"Germans! You have in your midst a great many men in concentration camps and forced labor battalions.

"Germans! Do not obey any orders, regardless of their source, urging you to molest, harm or persecute them, no matter what their religion or nationality may be.

"The Allies, whose armies have already established a firm foothold in Germany, expect, on their advance, to

1/ Cable No. 7115 from Bern dated October 26, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 3716 to Bern dated October 31, 1944.

find these people alive and unharmed. Heavy punishment awaits those who, directly or indirectly, and to whatever extent, bear any responsibility for the mistreatment of these people.

"May this serve as a warning to whoever at present has the power to issue orders."

Efforts made through the State Department to induce Soviet military or civil authorities to issue a similar warning proved unsuccessful.

Soviet Action Again Urged. Toward the end of January, 1945, the Board learned through Representative Mann in London that representatives of the Czech Government-in-Exile and of various Jewish groups had approached the Soviet Embassy there, pointing out the possibility that, as the Red Armies approached the camps at Oswiecim and Birkenau, the Germans would make last-minute efforts to exterminate those interned. They urged that the Soviet Government endeavor by all possible means to protect the camp inmates from last-minute slaughter at the hands of the Germans. In view of the nearness of Soviet forces, it was felt that warnings by the Soviet Government would be helpful and effective. Board Representative Mann had been asked to support this request.1/

The Board immediately cabled the United States Embassy in Moscow, asking that appropriate representations be made to Soviet authorities concerning the desirability of addressing suitable warnings to the Germans in those localities by radio and otherwise.2/

Board Advised Office of War Information on Programming. In January, 1945, the Board relayed to the Office of War Information information it had received concerning confusion and division of views within the ranks of German officialdom with regard to the Jewish question; whether because of fear of punishment, the desire to establish alibis or as a result of defects in the Nazi machinery of control, officials on the spot seemed not so determined as they once were to follow to the letter instructions from the authorities in Berlin with regard to the treatment of Jews. The Board pointed out that the policy of the central German authorities had nevertheless grown even more ruthless, if anything, and that they apparently intended to exterminate the Jews still alive in German-controlled territory as such territory was evacuated in the face of Allied advances, so that, ironically, the danger to these Jews became greater with every Allied military success.

1/ Cable No. 715 from London dated January 20, 1945.

2/ Cable No. 134 to Moscow dated January 22, 1945.



The Board stated that its reports demonstrated the compelling importance of increasing the psychological warfare pressure on the local Nazi and satellite officials and suggested that heavy emphasis on General Eisenhower's statement would be particularly helpful for this purpose. The value of such psychological pressure had been clearly shown in reports received by the Board from Hungary. For the assistance of the Office of War Information in formulating programs to be beamed to the enemy along the lines requested, the Board also listed the principal concentrations of Jews remaining in German-controlled territory.1/

Last-Minute Dangers Increased. From reports received during February and March, 1945, it seemed clear that the situation of civilian internees in Germany and German-occupied areas had grown more and more precarious. Camp populations were shifted from one area to another, on foot and over long distances; since thousands of persons were unable to endure the rigors of these forced marches, the number of deaths increased. It was feared that, as the Germans were faced with mounting difficulties, they would cease all attempts to feed internees who were not useful in their war effort.2/

As Allied troops overran more and more German territory, they found one concentration camp after another where Allied prisoners-of-war, interned civilians, and slave laborers imported into the Reich had systematically been starved, tortured, and murdered.

Although news reports from Germany indicated that internal telephone and telegraph connections were disrupted and it was hoped that any sudden last-minute extermination of civilian detainees might thus be precluded by lack of centralized S.S. control, there was nevertheless good reason to fear that the Nazi program for the extermination of these people might be carried out not only by the Nazi hierarchy but by roving bands of terrorists or by individual Germans. The Board therefore urged that the State Department give serious and immediate consideration to the issuance by this Government of a new warning addressed to all groups and individuals in Germany, stating that this Government considered such acts as death caused by starvation and neglect the same as murder in cold blood and punishable as war crimes.3/

1/ Letter to the Office of War Information dated January 6, 1945, comprising document 432, and letter from the Office of War Information dated January 12, 1945, comprising document 433.

2/ Cable No. 1519 from Paris dated March 29, 1945.

3/ Letter to the Secretary of State from the Board dated April 6, 1945, comprising document 434.

Warning Issued by the "Big Three." On April 23, 1945, such a statement was issued by the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union. This statement, warning that any German guilty of maltreating detainees or prisoners of war would be "ruthlessly pursued and brought to punishment," was the strongest and last formal threat issued by the Allies before the military collapse of the German nation in May, 1945.

The text of the warning read:

"The governments of the United Kingdom, United States of America and USSR, on behalf of all the United Nations at war with Germany, hereby issue a solemn warning to all commandants and guards in charge of Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens of the United Nations in Germany and German-occupied territory and to members of the Gestapo and all other persons of whatsoever service or rank in whose charge Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens have been placed, whether in battle zones, or lines of communication or in rear areas.

"They declare that they will hold all such persons, no less than German high command and competent German military, naval and air authorities, individually responsible for the safety and welfare of all Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens in their charges.

"Any person guilty of maltreating or allowing any Allied prisoners of war, internees or deported citizens to be maltreated, whether in battle zone, on lines of communication, in a camp, hospital, prison or elsewhere, will be ruthlessly pursued and brought to punishment.

"They give notice that they will regard this responsibility as binding in all circumstances and one which cannot be transferred to any other authorities or individuals whatsoever."

Every available means was used to get this information to remaining camps and prisons within the Reich. British, Soviet, and United States radio stations broadcast the warning to Germany, and to insure that every camp received the message Allied planes flying over the Reich dropped thousands of leaflets bearing the statement.

IV A. RELIEF PROGRAMS: REPORTS TO OBTAIN ASSIMILATED STATUS FOR  
INTERNEED CIVILIANS

Following the outbreak of war and as the result of informal agreement between the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Japan with regard to their respective nationals, the treatment of civilian internees in these countries was in some respects assimilated to the treatment of prisoners of war. No such agreement was made with Germany by the Soviet Union or any of the governments-in-exile, however, and as a result, civilian nationals of these countries were not given the advantage of treatment similar to that accorded prisoners of war under the 1929 Geneva Convention, including such rights and privileges as dispatch and receipt of mail, receipt of food parcels and clothing, and visits by International Red Cross delegates. Moreover, since the Germans did not recognize any of the governments-in-exile and since these governments did not have any German nationals under their control, there was little reason to anticipate that Germany would agree to apply to the nationals of these countries the principles observed in the treatment of prisoners of war.

Reports received by the Board from private sources indicated that, in the absence of such agreements, brutal and inhuman treatment was being accorded thousands of helpless victims of Nazi oppression. Word received confidentially from neutral observers confirmed the fact that disease and starvation were rampant among persons in this category.

Aid of International Red Cross Sought. In view of these circumstances the Board on April 29, 1944, addressed a communication to the International Red Cross, asking that an attempt be made to improve the condition of Jews and comparable groups within occupied territories. Toward this end the Board proposed that the Red Cross endeavor to obtain assurances from the German and satellite governments that Jews and other persons detained, interned, or otherwise confined because of race, religion, or political belief, would be accorded treatment equal to that of civilian internees. In the event the Red Cross felt that this general assurance was unobtainable, the Board asked that it press for an assurance of equal treatment at least to the extent that such persons would be permitted to receive packages under Red Cross supervision on the same basis as civilian internees.

The Board also asked that every effort be made to obtain for Jews and other victims of Nazi oppression, including those not actually interned, opportunities to obtain food and other necessities on a basis of equality with the local population.<sup>1/</sup>

Negative Reply Received from the Red Cross. Minister Harrison subsequently transmitted to the Board the text of the response received from the Red Cross. In this reply the Red Cross maintained that any efforts on its part along the lines proposed would go far beyond the limits of its "traditional capacity" and that the governments to whom such a request might be addressed would undoubtedly view the proposal in that light. It was also pointed out that in provisions of international agreements, the International Red Cross has only a slender basis upon which to found its humanitarian activities and is therefore dependent upon the good will of belligerent states. This being the case, the Red Cross felt that if it should attempt to act on behalf of certain categories of persons considered by the state concerned to be subject exclusively to its domestic legislation, it would lay itself open to the objection that it was intruding upon internal concerns of state.

In its note relaying this position the Red Cross attempted to meliorate its decision by alluding to the contribution made by the Board to the civilian war relief work to which the Red Cross felt compelled to confine itself. In outright war relief, it was stated, encouraging results had been achieved. According to the Red Cross, it was largely due to the Board's support of proposed feeding projects<sup>2/</sup> that urgently needed relief activities had been possible in certain countries.<sup>3/</sup>

Swiss Declined To Intercede. In view of this disappointingly negative response, the Board cabled Minister Harrison to proceed immediately with similar representations to the Swiss Government.<sup>4/</sup> The Swiss Foreign Office declined to make such a request, however, on the ground that it would be resented and might even jeopardize regular relief efforts of the International Red Cross.<sup>5/</sup>

Vatican Aid Enlisted. An appeal identical with that sent to the International Red Cross was meanwhile addressed through the Apostolic Delegate in Washington to the Vatican, in the hope that

- 1/ Cable No. 1498 to Bern dated April 29, 1944, comprising document 435.
- 2/ See especially Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
- 3/ Cables No. 3144 and 3147 from Bern dated May 17, 1944, comprising documents 436 and 437.
- 4/ Cable No. 2196 to Bern dated June 28, 1944.
- 5/ Cable No. 4506 from Bern dated July 14, 1944, comprising document 176.



the Holy See would find it possible to transmit and support the Board's request for alleviation of the lot of Jews and other persons detained in enemy territory, at least to the extent of permitting them to receive standard packages under Red Cross supervision.<sup>1/</sup>

Under date of July 27, 1944, the Apostolic Delegate replied that the Holy See had instructed its Nunciatures in Germany, Rumania, Hungary, and Slovakia to endeavor to obtain the assurances of authorities in their respective countries that such treatment would be accorded interned Jews. As a result of representations made by the Apostolic Nunciature in Budapest, the Hungarian Government was said already to have agreed to authorize the sending of foodstuffs through Red Cross channels to persons interned in concentration camps.<sup>2/</sup>

In response to representations made by the Apostolic Nunciature in Berlin, the Germans were said to have alleged that the protecting powers already had free access to concentration camps,<sup>3/</sup> and this response presumably terminated efforts directed toward obtaining such assurances through Berlin.

Several months later the Apostolic Delegate advised the Board that the Nunciature in Bratislava had been directed to take further and insistent steps with the Germans to permit Jews interned in Germany to receive packages containing food and clothing.<sup>4/</sup>

Proposed Intercession by Vatican and Neutral Governments. A report from private sources reaching the Board toward the end of 1944 indicated that the Apostolic Nunciature in Bern had under consideration for presentation to the Holy See a proposal that the Vatican, together with certain neutral governments, intercede with the German Government on behalf of civilian deportees in German-controlled territories. According to this report, the Germans were to be asked to liberate or allow to be interned in neutral countries the elderly men, women, and children among those deportees and to apply to other deportees treatment similar to that accorded prisoners of war. It was indicated that the Polish Minister at Bern had already requested his government in London to support the proposal.<sup>5/</sup>

- 1/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate from the State Department dated June 24, 1944, comprising document 438.
- 2/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate to the State Department dated July 27, 1944, comprising document 439.
- 3/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate to the State Department dated July 31, 1944, comprising document 440.
- 4/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated November 14, 1944, comprising document 412.
- 5/ Cable No. 7170 from Bern dated October 28, 1944.

Although no official confirmation of these efforts was received, the Board, in the interests of insuring the effectiveness of any such appeal, advised the Apostolic Delegate in Washington of the substance of this report and asked that he present to the Vatican the Board's view that two important circumstances merited attention in connection with such an approach: first, that the Germans had been prone to exclude Jews from concessions made in response to foreign intercession and to assume that Jews were not among the persons on whose behalf any intercession was made unless express reference was made to them; and second, that the value of any German concessions would be doubtful unless provision was made for effective supervision of their execution by competent neutral authorities.<sup>1/</sup>

Representations Made by Red Cross concerning "Schutzhäftlinge."

Despite the previous refusal of the International Red Cross to make representations toward obtaining assimilated status for all interned civilians held by the Germans,<sup>2/</sup> toward the end of 1944 Board Representative McClelland learned that the Red Cross had acceded to the Board's request at least to the extent of appealing to the German Foreign Office to consider extending to "schutzhäftlinge" (persons detained for security reasons) the treatment granted to enemy nationals in Germany and German-occupied territory, including particularly the right to receive food parcels.<sup>3/</sup> Although the answer to this appeal, made in October 1944, was long delayed, an affirmative response was finally obtained when the inevitable military collapse of Germany finally became apparent to the German Foreign Office. As a result of this concession on the part of the Germans, in the last weeks of the war the Red Cross was able to deliver to suffering minorities in German internment substantial quantity of food parcels supplied by the Board.<sup>4/</sup>

1/ Letter to the Apostolic Delegate dated November 2, 1944. In this connection see also Relief Programs: Efforts To Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.

2/ See above.

3/ Cable No. 7998 from Bern dated December 7, 1944, comprising document 441.

4/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

#### IV B. RELIEF PROGRAMS: THE BOARD'S FOOD PARCELS PROGRAM

In accordance with its directive from the President, the Board took bold and vigorous action to afford relief to the suffering victims inside Nazi territory. This was a difficult task. The British-American blockade authorities as a matter of established policy refused to permit the sending of food and other supplies through the blockade to "unassimilated" 1/ Jews and other minorities in Nazi hands primarily because adequate assurances were lacking that relief so provided would go to the intended beneficiaries and not to the enemy. At the time of the Board's creation a slight relaxation of this firm policy had been obtained by private relief agencies for the shipment of small quantities of food from neutral areas to specifically named detainees.2/ The Board undertook to expand these private schemes and to supplement them by a governmental program.

One of the Board's first steps was to call upon the International Committee of the Red Cross for suggestions and information concerning the specific needs and the possibilities of delivering food supplies to Jews and other minority groups in German-controlled areas.3/ The International Red Cross in February, 1944, replied with the suggestion that the Board immediately create stockpiles of food and clothing parcels, shipped from the United States, in Geneva other neutral locations for eventual distribution exclusively to unassimilated groups in German concentration camps.4/ In making this request, the International Red Cross pointed out that the increasing scarcity of food and clothing in neutral markets required the shipment of supplies from other areas. In addition, the Red Cross indicated that it had been able to secure certain distribution guarantees from individual camp commanders that such relief supplies

1/ See Relief Programs: Efforts to Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.

2/ See Relief Programs of Private Organizations.

3/ Cable No. 279 to Bern dated January 27, 1944, comprising document 442.

4/ Letter from the International Red Cross to Minister Harrison at Bern dated February 29, 1944, comprising document 443.

would actually reach the intended beneficiaries. In transmitting this reply for the International Red Cross, Minister Harrison strongly recommended favorable action.1/

ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR EXPERIMENTAL FEEDING PROGRAM. Inquiries directed by the Board to its representatives abroad as well as to representatives of various private American relief agencies confirmed the fact that no substantial quantities of foodstuffs or clothing were available in the neutral countries of Europe for projects of this nature. In the light of the urgency created by the discriminatory Nazi food and work regulations resulting in thousands of deaths from malnutrition and slow starvation, and in view of the Red Cross assurances, the Board decided to press for the adoption on an experimental basis of a program providing for the shipment of food from the United States.

Allied blockade approval was requested, but was not forthcoming for some time. During the visit to this country in June, 1944, of Mr. Dingle M. Foote, Parliamentary Under Secretary of the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, the matter was again forcefully raised. In discussions between Mr. Foote and representatives of both the State Department and the Foreign Economic Administration, an agreement was reached at the Board's insistence with the British in June, 1944, permitting the shipment of 100,000 food parcels per month for a period of three months, for distribution by the Red Cross to persons in Nazi concentration camps where satisfactory distribution could be guaranteed. In addition, and at the Board's suggestion, it was also agreed that 25,000 clothing parcels might be prepared for later distribution to these same people when certain additional information had been obtained from the Red Cross on the clothing situation in the camps, if circumstances warranted.

Assurances were to be required from the Red Cross as to distribution to intended beneficiaries and as to adequate supervision to insure no benefit to the enemy, and reports were to be made on the delivery of all consignments. A memorandum to this effect was drawn up following conferences between British and United States officials, and was approved by representatives of both Governments.2/

While the British originally had proposed that this program be limited to detained persons in what was formerly occupied

1/ Cable No. 1366 from Bern dated March 6, 1944, and Cable No. 2031 from Bern dated April 1, 1944, comprising document 444.  
2/ Memorandum dated June 12, 1944, comprising document 445.



France, at the Board's insistence it was agreed that the proposed measure would not be so limited and that it would apply to any internment camp in Europe selected by the Red Cross.

Red Cross Intercession with Germans Sought. Shortly after this agreement was reached the Relief Subcommittee of the Joint Blockade Committee was asked to request the International Red Cross to approach German authorities immediately to ascertain whether they would, in principle, permit the Red Cross to distribute food and clothing parcels in all camps in German-controlled Europe holding persons not assimilated to the status of prisoners of war.

Minister Harrison and Board Representative McClelland in Bern were asked to follow this matter closely upon the receipt by the Red Cross of the Blockade Committee proposal.1/

During the time formal blockade authorization was awaited Representative McClelland continued his efforts to work out with the Red Cross procedures and guarantees with respect to the distribution of such parcels. Representative McClelland had previously indicated that he was not only convinced of the adequacy of Red Cross distribution controls; in many cases he felt that the controls offered were superior to those available for assimilated groups.2/

Counterproposal Advanced by the Red Cross. Joint representations along the lines proposed were made to the Red Cross on July 4, 1944, by British and American representatives. The Red Cross, however, reiterated a position it had previously assumed: any approach to the Germans for permission to distribute relief packages generally to unassimilated persons confined in camps in enemy territory, the Red Cross felt, would be flatly refused. A counterproposal was advanced by the Red Cross, the substance of which was relayed to the Board by Representative McClelland in mid-July, 1944. In this counterproposal the Red Cross pointed out that in the case of selected camps, it was able to assure the delivery of individual packages and to verify their receipt by the detainees for whom they were intended, despite the official attitude of the Germans in refusing to assimilate such detainees to the status of prisoners of war or civilian internees. In the past Red Cross delegates had been able to make unofficial visits to these camps, and it was felt that in the future they would be able to repeat such visits.

1/ Cable No. 2198 to Bern dated June 28, 1944, comprising document 446.

2/ Cable No. 3877 from Bern dated June 17, 1944, comprising document 447.

The distribution which blockade authorities had proposed individually and personally by a Red Cross delegate in the various camps was no more possible, it was asserted than it was in prisoner-of-war camps. On the other hand, the Board was assured that Red Cross delegates had many possibilities of verifying, both by means of regular visits, as in the case of prisoner-of-war camps, and through controls exercised independent of the regular visits, the fact that in the camps to be specified, relief goods were being consumed by the beneficiaries for whom they were intended and were not diverted.

For these reasons, the Red Cross asked that blockade authorities take into account the realities of the situation and permit the use of available control methods in determining whether the distribution of relief goods was being carried out satisfactorily, in place of insisting on any one form of control. In assuming responsibility for such distributions, the Red Cross indicated that in the event any irregularities were brought to its attention in connection with the receipt of relief goods, it would suspend all shipments immediately.

While the Red Cross could not reveal either the number or the names of civilian prisoners in its possession, or information regarding the size of the various camps, delivery during the initial month of a maximum of 30,000 parcels for concentration camps and 35,000 to Theresienstadt (to which a Red Cross delegate had access and which was regarded as a ghetto and not a camp) was proposed.1/

Approval of Counterproposal by Blockade Authorities Sought.  
On July 31, 1944, in a communication to the United States Embassy in London, the Foreign Economic Administration, the State Department, and the Board jointly asked that Ambassador Winant present the Red Cross counterproposal to the Relief Subcommittee of the London blockade authorities as soon as possible and endeavor to obtain a favorable reply. The Board pointed out that the economic warfare considerations that had previously precluded making packages available to the Red Cross for distribution under the plan suggested had become less controlling than had been the case in the past. Ambassador Winant was informed of the Board's conviction that the amount of food which might fall into enemy hands could not affect the outcome of the war nor prolong it, while the desperate situation of the people held in these camps made it increasingly necessary that an effort be made to give them some assistance even in the absence of ironclad guarantees of 100-percent receipt by the intended beneficiaries.2/

- 1/ Cable No. 4578 from Bern dated July 18, 1944, comprising document 448.  
2/ Cable No. 6035 to London dated July 31, 1944, comprising document 449.

Formal blockade authorization for the shipment of a total of 300,000 specially prepared food parcels for distribution on the basis the Red Cross proposed was eventually received on August 5, 1944, thereby enabling the Board to get the program under way.<sup>1/</sup>

PARCELS FROM "S.S. CHRISTINA" MADE AVAILABLE TO INTERNEES.

Pending the formal blockade approval of the Board's proposal to ship food packages from the United States, agreement was obtained in June, 1944, to permit distribution by the International Red Cross to persons interned in German-controlled territory, of certain foodstuffs still fit for human consumption salvaged from the cargo of the "S.S. Christina" following the beaching of this vessel near Cette, France. The food supplies in question were contained in some 315,000 food parcels originally intended for distribution to French and Belgian prisoners of war.<sup>2/</sup> Negotiations were carried on with French and Belgian officials, who held title to the parcels and with the International Red Cross. In the course of these negotiations, the Board guaranteed to arrange for any incidental financing that might be necessary.<sup>3/</sup>

Word was received from Algiers that the sale of such food packages as were available, at a price to be decided by the Red Cross, was acceptable to the French Committee of National Liberation,<sup>4/</sup> and negotiations with the French were concluded in Washington.

The Belgian Government-in-Exile indicated that it preferred to forward to Geneva for ultimate allocation to Belgian war prisoners as originally planned, any supplies that could still withstand such shipment. Agreement was obtained to sell the balance of the salvageable materials, however, to the Red Cross for allocation as proposed.<sup>5/</sup>

Report Received on Distribution of "Christina" Supplies. According to a report on the distribution of the "Christina" goods, subsequently submitted by the Red Cross through Board Representative McClelland, a total of 25,600 two-and-one-half kilogram

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 6279 from London dated August 5, 1944, comprising document 450.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 4681 from London dated June 10, 1944, comprising document 451, and Cable No. 4829 to London dated June 19, 1944, comprising document 452.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1925 to Algiers, Cable No. 4829 to London, and Cable No. 2102 to Bern, all dated June 19, 1944.
- <sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 2175 from Algiers dated June 29, 1944.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 5194 from London dated June 30, 1944.

parcels were made up from the 56 tons of supplies salvaged and shipped during September and October, 1944. About half were individually addressed while the remainder were in collective shipments to unassimilated persons in the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, Dachau, Ravensbrueck, Hamburg-Neuengamme, Natzweiler, Weimar-Schliessfach, Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen, and to the camp described as Feldpost 07702. Individual receipt cards used in collective shipments to the camp at Dachau alone recorded the names and numbers of 8,000 political deportees. Since German authorities had consistently refused to communicate lists of deportees to the Red Cross, the information thus obtained had a double importance. In many cases it was the source of the first news families had had from deported relatives; in a number of instances the cards even bore the names of deportees previously thought to have been executed. Moreover, possession of this information later enabled the Red Cross to address parcels later supplied directly by the Board to these individuals by name, with greater assurance of proper receipt. Red Cross delegates were able to visit all of the camps to which parcels were sent and were satisfied that the great majority of the packages reached the intended beneficiaries. Distribution of collective shipments was greatly facilitated in certain concentration camps where the Red Cross was instrumental in persuading the commanders to allow the designation of "men of confidence" for various nationals groups. Only a few camps were encountered where the prisoners were not allowed to return the individual receipts.<sup>1/</sup>

Initial Shipment of Board Food Parcels from United States Made. As the result of a meeting between representatives of the American Red Cross and the Board, an agreement was reached in July, 1944, whereby the former was to arrange all details in connection with the packing and shipping of the 300,000 food parcels for which formal blockade authorization was then being awaited.<sup>2/</sup> Appropriate arrangements were later made with the Office of Price Administration for the necessary releases from rationing controls of the food purchased for packaging.<sup>3/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 7365 from Bern dated November 6, 1944, comprising document 453, and Cable No. 8044 from Bern dated December 9, 1944.
- <sup>2/</sup> Letter to the American Red Cross dated July 25, 1944, comprising document 454, and letter from the American Red Cross dated July 28, 1944, comprising document 455.
- <sup>3/</sup> Letters to the Office of Price Administration dated August 16 and 23, 1944; see also letter to the Office of Price Administration dated February 12, 1945, and letter from the Office of Price Administration dated February 28, 1945, relative to the subsequent expansion of this program.



In order to take advantage of certain shipping space made available by the American Red Cross on the "S.S. Gripsholm" before the Red Cross itself could accomplish the packing of the foodstuffs for which space was available, and in order to speed the parcels to the intended beneficiaries, the Board in cooperation with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in August, 1944, arranged for the purchase and packaging of 15,000 three-kilogram parcels commercially at a cost of \$41,600. These parcels went forward toward the end of August to Gothenburg, Sweden,<sup>1/</sup> from which point they were distributed by delegates of the International Red Cross, as planned.<sup>2/</sup>

Funds Obtained for Balance of Experimental Feeding Program. On September 12, 1944, President Roosevelt, in a directive to the Secretary of the Treasury, the War Food Administrator, the Chairman of the American Red Cross, and the Executive Director of the Board, ordered that certain unobligated balances on allocation to the Treasury Procurement Division and the War Food Administration from Congressional appropriations for foreign war relief be obligated in the amount of \$1,068,750 for the purpose of defraying the costs of procuring and packaging food products for the remaining 285,000 parcels in the Board's initial program.<sup>3/</sup> Following packaging by the American Red Cross, a total of 224,328 of these parcels were forwarded on December 1, 1944, on the "S.S. Saivo" to Gothenburg for transshipment to the German port of Luebeck.<sup>4/</sup> On December 19, 1944, the American Red Cross shipped the balance of 60,672 parcels aboard the "S.S. Caritas II" to the French port of Toulon (this change of destination having been made at the suggestion of the International Red Cross because of difficulties encountered in reshipment from Gothenburg), from which point they were transshipped overland to Geneva for ultimate distribution to camps in southern Germany. The movement of all of these supplies was completed without expenditures for customs or for any form of taxation in the countries receiving such relief.

Experimental Shipments to Poland Authorized. Board Representative McClelland meanwhile reported that, in view of dire relief

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 2897 to Bern dated August 23, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 6263 from Bern dated September 21, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Memorandum from the President dated September 12, 1944, comprising document 456.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 4001 to Bern dated November 25, 1944. A report from Board Representative Olsen in June, 1945, described in detail the distribution of these parcels; see Cable No. 2071 from Stockholm dated June 8, 1945.

needs in Poland, the Red Cross was willing to try to send collective test shipments to several specified Polish localities. It was pointed out, however, that guarantees concerning control of the safe arrival and distribution of the parcels could not be given as there was no prospect of securing permission for Red Cross delegates to visit these camps. Representative McClelland felt that despite these circumstances test shipments to Poland were advisable, particularly in view of the frightful conditions under which many thousands of persons were reportedly living 1/ in these camps.

The Board in turn authorized the forwarding of such test shipments under the best obtainable distribution guarantees. No repeat shipments to Poland were to be made until reasonable assurance was obtained that supplies from the test shipments had reached the intended beneficiaries.

Equitable Distribution of Board Food Parcels Urged. The Board in late December, 1944, found occasion to emphasize that arrangements for the distribution of all its parcels should be made on an equitable basis motivated solely by need and accessibility.2/

Reiteration of this previously stated position of the Board had been prompted by reports from Representative McClelland indicating that a restricted distribution was being accorded food salvaged from the "S.S. Christina" 3/ as well as parcels from the initial lot shipped by the Board to Gothenburg 4/ and that further distribution of the Board's parcels limited to non-Jews in German internment was planned in order to compensate for feeding programs carried out by the International Red Cross and the Swedish Red Cross with funds made available by private relief agencies, in the course of which the distribution had been predominantly Jewish.5/ It was the Board's feeling that distribution among potential beneficiaries on racial or religious grounds not only represented unjustified discrimination but also indicated a departure from previous agreements with the Red Cross that the distribution of relief should be motivated solely by the needs of endangered persons and by their accessibility.

1/ Cable No. 8169 from Bern dated December 16, 1944.

2/ Cable No. 4314 to Bern dated December 22, 1944, comprising document 457.

3/ See above.

4/ Cable No. 8044 from Bern dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 458.

5/ See Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and World Jewish Congress.

In view of indications that the term "camps" was being narrowly interpreted by the Red Cross, the Board also asked Representative McClelland to urge that the term be interpreted realistically, in order that distribution might be made to all places where unassimilated persons were confined, detained, or otherwise forcibly congregated and where some reasonable assurance could be obtained that the parcels would reach the intended beneficiaries.

Board Urged To Obtain Trucks for Relief Deliveries. With the rapid deterioration of the internal rail transportation system in Germany in early 1945, the Germans became increasingly less inclined to make freight cars available to the International Red Cross for delivery of the Board's food parcels. Various shipments of relief supplies were held up for long periods before delivery could be accomplished.

On the other hand, the spread of internal disorganization in Germany and the breakdown of transportation resulted in a growing independence on the part of camp commanders and isolated S.S. groups. As the result of local arrangements, the Red Cross was able to reach camps in the Vienna area, particularly those with Jewish inmates, a willingness to collaborate in relief activities having been indicated by the S.S. commandant there and by the S.S. officer in charge of Hungarian Jewish deportees in Austria. As a further example of this trend, a delegate working out of Red Cross headquarters at Uffing, near Munich, had been admitted to the hitherto unvisited and unknown camp of Landsberg-am-Lech, in Eastern Bavaria, where there were about 15,000 internees. The delegate reported that the commander of the camp was unusually accommodating and that if he had had any means of transportation or a supply of parcels available at his headquarters, he would have encountered no difficulty in making direct personal delivery of them to this camp. The same possibilities were said to apply to the camp at Dachau near Munich.

These and other circumstances surrounding the distribution of relief supplies were outlined to the Board in a cable from Representative McClelland in January, 1945, in which he recommended that serious consideration be given to endeavoring to obtain a number of five- to seven-ton trucks since lack of transportation facilities had created a bottleneck preventing delivery of Board parcels. He expressed the conviction that if four or five such vehicles could be lent to the International Red Cross for use in delivering Board parcels to accessible camps, much could be accomplished, particularly in the Vienna area. Superior control possibilities represented a further important advantage in truck deliveries, as contrasted with the uncertain controls obtainable with shipments made via German railroads, when it was frequently difficult to trace freight cars, which might be held up on sidings

for weeks and even months without the knowledge of the Red Cross, as had occurred when cars carrying parcels from Gothenburg were detained near Luebeck.1/

Authorization Obtained for Expansion of Feeding Program. Initial reports on distribution received from the Red Cross indicated that distribution guarantees had been maintained and that nationals of all the United Nations were sharing in the distribution of these parcels. In view of these indications of success in the experimental program undertaken and because of the extreme urgency of extending additional aid to unassimilated persons in German-controlled territory, the Board in conjunction with the State Department and the Foreign Economic Administration in November 1944 again approached the Relief Subcommittee of the Joint Blockade Committee through Ambassador Winant in London for authorization for the shipment of an additional 300,000 three-kilogram parcels.2/ This authorization was promptly obtained.3/

On January 31, 1945, by Presidential directive to the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the American Red Cross, and the Executive Director of the Board, the President ordered that unobligated balances on allocation to the Treasury Procurement Division from Congressional appropriations for foreign war relief be obligated in the amount of \$1,125,000 for the proposed expansion of the Board's feeding program.4/

BROAD NEW RELIEF PROGRAM UNDERTAKEN BY BOARD. At a meeting of the members of the Board in February 1945 certain new circumstances prevailing in enemy territory were outlined and a proposed plan of action was discussed. According to the best information available, while the Germans by that time had apparently abandoned wholesale extermination of detainees, large numbers of the physically unfit were in imminent danger of death from starvation, exposure, and deliberate neglect.5/ It seemed clear that if the

- 1/ Cable No. 455 from Bern dated January 22, 1945, comprising document 459.
- 2/ Cable No. 9419 to London dated November 10, 1944, comprising document 460.
- 3/ Cable No. 10022 from London dated November 16, 1944, comprising document 461. Blockade authorization for a third shipment was obtained in March 1945. See Cable No. 1554 to London dated March 1, 1945, and Cable No. 2353 from London dated March 7, 1945.
- 4/ Memorandum from the President dated January 31, 1945, comprising document 462.
- 5/ Cable No. 416 from Bern dated January 20, 1945.



lives of these persecuted groups were to be saved, food, clothing, and medicines would have to reach them at once, and if possible, they should be removed to places of safety without unnecessary delay. Approval was given at this meeting to certain proposals advanced by Executive Director O'Dwyer for obtaining the necessary cooperation of the International Red Cross and of the Swiss Government and for obtaining the necessary food, medicines, and transportation equipment. The two-fold program approved envisaged (1) furnishing food and other relief through the International Red Cross, in addition to that previously dispatched, to physically unfit unassimilated detainees within enemy-controlled territory, and (2) their removal by the Red Cross to safety in Switzerland as soon as possible.<sup>1/</sup>

Toward these ends, Board Representative McClelland was asked to reexamine the availability in Switzerland of food and other relief supplies as well as transportation equipment. He was further requested to seek the consent of the Red Cross to deliver the relief supplies in enemy territory and to organize and effectuate the removal of detainees to Switzerland. With the concurrence of the Currie Mission then in Switzerland, Representative McClelland was also authorized to approach the Swiss Government for the purpose of obtaining its consent to make available to the Red Cross immediately the necessary supplies and equipment for this relief and evacuation program against the Board's assurances of replenishment or compensation at a later time, and to admit, house, and maintain all detainees reaching Swiss borders until the Board should succeed in arranging for their evacuation to Allied territory.<sup>2/</sup>

Preparations Made in Switzerland. Appropriate arrangements were promptly made with the Red Cross by Representative McClelland and the Swiss Government. Efforts were also begun to arrange for trucking facilities so urgently required for relief deliveries. It proved unnecessary, however, to ask the Swiss to make food supplies available for deliveries to concentration camps against replacement guarantees, since the remaining 60,000 parcels in the Board's original experimental feeding program had reached Geneva from Toulon, France, by that time.<sup>3/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> For details concerning evacuations accomplished under this new program see Rescue to and through Switzerland.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 819 to Bern dated February 23, 1945, comprising document 88.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1345 from Bern dated March 2, 1945.

In order that Representative McClelland might have adequate assistance in the execution of this all-out life saving project, Board Representative Katzki following his return from Turkey was dispatched to Switzerland in mid-March 1945. 1/

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Aid Pledged. To prepare for the eventuality of heavy last-minute evacuations of detainees from Germany to Switzerland and the problem of housing and maintaining large numbers of additional refugees in that country, Executive Director O'Dwyer approached the Director of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for help. He proposed that it agree to make food supplies available in Switzerland for the maintenance in Switzerland of refugees evacuated from Germany. Upon being advised that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration could not operate in Switzerland, the Board suggested that its help be offered to the International Red Cross and that the refugees succeeding in reaching Switzerland be regarded as persons in transit to refugee camps operated by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. After due consideration of the matter, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration agreed to make the supplies available to the International Red Cross, if needed. 2/

Transportation Deadlock Broken. Because of the shortage of transportation equipment available to the Red Cross for the distribution of relief supplies and in view of the fact that the Swiss Government had proved unable to provide trucks for this purpose, Representative McClelland was meanwhile authorized to make an effort to obtain the necessary trucking facilities from any possible sources. 3/ In accordance with these instructions, a number of trucks were rented from private concerns in Switzerland; more were understood to be available if tires could be obtained. The Young Men's Christian Association in Switzerland and the French Government both made trucks available to the Red Cross directly, but they could not go forward because fuel with which to operate them could not be obtained. 4/

United States Army Comes To Board's Aid. At this juncture, the Board went to the War Department for assistance in procuring

1/ Cable No. 1014 to Bern dated March 10, 1945.

2/ Letter from Executive Director O'Dwyer to General Counsel of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration dated March 15, 1945, comprising document 463. See also Cooperation with International Organizations: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

3/ Cable No. 998 to Bern dated March 9, 1945, comprising document 464.

4/ Cable No. 1740 from Bern dated March 23, 1945.

the urgently needed gasoline, tires and lubricating oils. General Eisenhower, at the personal request of Secretary Stimson, suggested that representatives of the Board proceed to Paris immediately to discuss the details of the Board's problem with the appropriate Allied military authorities at SHAEF Headquarters. Executive Director O'Dwyer immediately ordered Board Representatives Mann, McClelland, and Katzki to undertake the proposed negotiations with the military authorities. As a result of these discussions with representatives of the Allied Supreme Command, a number of truck tires and tubes were obtained and arrangements were made for the delivery of 2,000 gallons of gasoline weekly.

After his return to Bern, Representative McClelland informed the Board that the Swiss trucks which he had obtained were being equipped with the tires and tubes which had been secured but that other trucks available to the Board in Switzerland were of the type that burn Diesel oil instead of gasoline. The cooperation of both the United States and British Legations was enlisted in connection with the blockade aspects of replacement, and a quantity of Diesel oil was subsequently released from Swiss commercial sources for the use of the Red Cross in the operation of the Board's trucks.<sup>1/</sup>

Food Parcels Obtained from Prisoner-of-war Stockpile. Meanwhile, in Washington, efforts were made to obtain the additional 300,000 parcels for which blockade authorization had been obtained in January 1945. Unfortunately the American Red Cross, which had arranged for the packaging as well as the shipment of the bulk of previously approved parcels, was unable to extend its packaging facilities for this second shipment but agreed to extend shipping facilities for the movement of these supplies. Accordingly, plans were made to obtain the new parcels commercially through the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department.

However, upon exploration of the commercial field interested in producing packages of this nature, it became apparent to the Board that even under the best circumstances it would take months to go through the sequence of obtaining food allocations, food priorities, the food itself, and the containers to package the food and to ship the parcels to Europe. Food conditions in this country were exceedingly stringent and restrictive and the Board lost all hope of being able to obtain the food in this country in time. Once again Executive Director O'Dwyer went to the War Department for help. At his request, the Army agreed to sell the Board the food contained in 206,000 United States prisoner-of-war parcels from its large stockpile in the Geneva warehouses of the International Red Cross, on condition that the parcels be re-packaged by the Board to remove Red Cross and Army symbols before

<sup>1/</sup> Cables No. 1981 and 1982 from Bern, both dated April 5, 1945.



delivery to the concentration camp inmates.<sup>1/</sup> Appropriate instructions accordingly were sent to Board Representative McClelland <sup>2/</sup> and to the American Red Cross representative in Geneva.<sup>3/</sup>

Assistance to "Schutzhaeftlinge" Arranged. Despite the fact that central German authorities had categorically refused permission for the Red Cross to distribute relief parcels generally and the reception of parcels by internees had been tolerated only in a small number of camps,<sup>4/</sup> according to a report received from Board Representative McClelland in February 1945 there were indications that the S.S. might officially permit the distribution of relief parcels to certain categories of interned schutzhaeftlinge (the term apparently applied by the Germans to all persons detained for security reasons).<sup>5/</sup>

Although there was no indication as to what had prompted the more liberal attitude which the S.S. had reportedly assumed, it obviously offered an excellent opportunity for sending into Germany not only relief to persecuted minorities but also supervisory Red Cross personnel whose presence might serve as an invaluable protection for the lives of thousands of persons as the Nazi system collapsed. The Board therefore asked Representative McClelland to work with the Red Cross toward extending the scope of the Board's feeding program to include assistance to schutzhaeftlinge if at all possible. Representative McClelland was also asked to ascertain (1) whether certain national groups to which the Germans had indicated that parcels might be sent comprised or excluded Jews and (2) whether the persons so designated included persons actively engaged in labor in Germany.<sup>6/</sup>

A written request along the lines requested was later submitted by Representative McClelland to the Red Cross, urging that visits of its delegates to places of detention of all categories of schutzhaeftlinge be increased to the greatest possible extent, that the number of its representatives in Germany be augmented as substantially and as rapidly as possible, and that its delegates

- <sup>1/</sup> Exchange of letters between Executive Director O'Dwyer and War Department dated March 30, 1945, and April 4, 1945, comprising documents 465 and 466.
- <sup>2/</sup> Cables No. 1392 and No. 1430 to Bern dated April 9 and 12, 1945.
- <sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 161 dated April 18, 1945, to Geneva comprising document 467.
- <sup>4/</sup> See Relief Programs: Efforts to Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.
- <sup>5/</sup> Cable No. 1056 from Bern dated February 16, 1945.
- <sup>6/</sup> Cable No. 804 to Bern dated February 23, 1945, comprising document 468.



be instructed to take every advantage of the mounting confusion within Germany in order to mitigate the lot of all civilian detainees and to dissuade German officials from last-minute extremes.1/

In response, the Red Cross indicated its willingness in principle to undertake the delivery of relief supplies to any category of accessible schutzhaeftlinge subject to the provision of means of transporting such supplies. Five new delegates of the Red Cross left for Germany at about this time, and efforts were continued to arrange for the sending of others.2/

With respect to the two specific inquiries made by the Board with respect to relief to schutzhaeftlinge, Representative McClelland's investigations revealed (1) that Jews were included in the national groups designated by the Germans as eligible to receive relief and (2) that most schutzhaeftlinge who were capable of physical labor were, in fact, employed by the Nazis at tasks of varying importance to Germany's war effort, although no statistics were available as to the numbers actually engaged in such work. This being the case, plans were made whereby the Red Cross was to deliver parcels, insofar as was practically possible, only to those schutzhaeftlinge who were ill and exhausted.3/

Additional Red Cross Delegates Sent into Germany. As the result of a subsequent meeting arranged by the President of the International Red Cross with German officials, permission was obtained for Red Cross delegates to be stationed in all major camps, both for schutzhaeftlinge and for prisoners of war, to exercise personal supervision over relief distributions. This permission was on condition that the delegates remain in these camps until the end of the war and not travel back and forth to Switzerland, a condition presumably imposed for purposes of military security. The Germans further agreed to permit deliveries of relief of all types, by truck or other means of transport, to schutzhaeftlinge without regard to nationality or race, although the request was made that, in view of the difficulties of the food supply situation for the Germans themselves, any such distributions of relief, especially to marching columns along the roads, be discreetly conducted. Following receipt of this blanket approval, additional delegates for the camp posts were selected by the Red Cross and sent into Germany as rapidly as possible.4/

1/ Cable No. 1159 from Bern dated February 22, 1945.

2/ Cables No. 1159 and 1345 from Bern dated February 22 and March 2, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 1346 from Bern dated March 2, 1945, comprising document 469.

4/ Cable No. 1727 from Bern dated March 22, 1945, comprising document 470.

Reports Received on Parcels Distribution.1/ While the rapidity of military developments somewhat hampered the Board's feeding program, it redoubled the importance of measures to bring relief to detainees who otherwise might not have received even the minimum quantities of food necessary to sustain their lives. By the time of Germany's military collapse, shipments of Board food parcels had been made to concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, Hamburg-Neuengamme, Mauthausen, to a camp known only as Feldpost 07702 at which a number of prominent French political deportees were held, and to Bergen-Belsen;2/ to Ravensbrueck and to a Red Cross depot set up at Luebeck for later delivery to camps within reach;3/ to Theresienstadt, Landsberg-am-Lech; to still other concentration camps in Wurtemberg and Bavaria, to a temporary camp for deportees set up by the Red Cross at Hoechst, to the Vienna and Bolzano areas, and for distribution along the roads to convoys of rescued detainees.4/

As another means of speeding the delivery of food parcels to civilian internees in Germany, some 40,000 kosher food parcels from the Board's stocks at Gothenburg were released in March 1945 to representatives in Sweden of the World Jewish Congress.5/ Except for a small number of individually addressed parcels dispatched through parcel post channels, actual distribution of these parcels was effected by the Swedish Red Cross under the usual distribution guarantees required by the Board. Principal beneficiaries were Jewish inmates of Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrueck, and other camps in Germany, the remainder of the parcels having been used to afford relief to Danish Jews in Sweden and to a large group of evacuees from Ravensbrueck who reached Denmark in critical condition after having gone without food for several days.6/

- 1/ In accordance with the directive contained in Executive Order No. 8495 of July 26, 1940, and those issued subsequently, the Board on June 25, 1945, submitted to the President a report on the receipt, transportation and distribution of all relief supplies purchased for its food parcels with funds made available under Section 40 of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, 1941, the Third Supplemental National Defense Appropriation Act, 1942, and the Second Deficiency Appropriation Act, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 8044 from Bern dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 458.
- 3/ Cable No. 2139 from Bern dated April 14, 1945, comprising document 471.
- 4/ Cable No. 2823 from Bern dated May 19, 1945, comprising document 472.
- 5/ Cable No. 1765 from Bern dated March 24, 1945, and Cable No. 566 to Stockholm dated March 28, 1945.
- 6/ Cable No. 2071 from Stockholm dated June 8, 1945, comprising document 473.

In addition, trucks and fuel obtained through the Board's efforts made possible the shipment to German-controlled areas of substantial relief supplies furnished by private American relief agencies having representation in Switzerland.1/

Shortly thereafter, however, Board Representatives Katzki and McClelland advised the Board that reports of Red Cross representatives returning to Switzerland from Germany, Austria, and Northern Italy indicated that, while Allied military authorities were making every effort to assure adequate relief to liberated civilian detainees and deportees, an unavoidable delay in reaching many of the persons formerly aided by the Board through the Red Cross was being experienced because of the magnitude and complexity of the task and the difficulties of transportation and distribution involved. Emergency calls for aid for liberated detainees and deportees in temporary agglomerations and on the roads had been sent by Red Cross field workers. Large numbers of sick persons remaining in concentration camps were also reported to be in need. In view of the fact that Red Cross truck convoys were still leaving Switzerland periodically so that the Red Cross was technically able to continue relief shipments to meet this situation, the Board's representatives strongly recommended that certain undistributed Board parcels remaining in Switzerland be permitted to remain at the disposal of the Red Cross in order to enable it to fill this temporary urgent demand.2/

The urgency of this situation led the Board to agree that the movement of these remaining parcels (which had, in effect, already been turned over to the Red Cross) should not be interrupted, this agreement being predicated on the approval of the appropriate military authorities.3/ A total of 28,792 parcels subsequently went forward for distribution to the persecuted groups for which they had been intended.4/

Board Disposes of Surplus Food Parcels to United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. At the time the fighting ceased in Europe, the Board had exhausted practically all of its regular parcels and would soon have been sending the prisoner-of-war parcels obtained from the United States Army. As it was, on

1/ Cable No. 2421 from Bern dated April 25, 1945.

2/ This recommendation was made by phone, telephonic communication with the Board's representatives having by that time been established; see also Cable No. 2797 from Bern dated May 18, 1945.

3/ Cable No. 525 to Bern dated May 17, 1945.

4/ Letter from Representative McClelland in Bern dated June 20, 1945.

VE-Day the parcels which had been obtained from the Army had not yet been repackaged to remove Red Cross and Army symbols.<sup>1/</sup> With the approval of the Surplus Property Board,<sup>2/</sup> arrangements were made with officials of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for the sale of these parcels to the latter agency for distribution to displaced persons in liberated countries. The Foreign Economic Administration handled the procurement for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the proceeds of the sale reverted to the United States Treasury.

Relief to Refugees Liberated from the Germans. Following the complete victory of Allied Armies in Europe, requests continued to reach the Board for relief and assistance to refugees liberated from the Germans. Since the Executive Order establishing the Board limited Board activities to the rescue and relief of victims of enemy oppression in enemy-occupied territory, on May 10, 1945, the Board's representatives abroad were advised that all requests concerning relief and assistance to refugees liberated from the Germans should therefore be referred to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, appropriate military authorities, private refugee organizations, and to other national and international groups authorized to deal with matters of this nature.<sup>3/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Cable No. 2688 from Bern dated May 10, 1945.

<sup>2/</sup> Letter from Executive Director O'Dwyer to Surplus Property Board dated May 30, 1945, and reply from Administrator of Surplus Property Board dated May 30, 1945, comprising documents 474 and 475.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1763 to Bern dated May 10, 1945, comprising document 476 ; repeated in substance on the following day to Stockholm.



IV C. RELIEF PROGRAMS: RELIEF THROUGH THE BLOCKADE TO COOPERATING NEUTRALS

Information available to the Board early in 1944 indicated that Switzerland and other neutral countries contiguous to enemy-held territory would be in a position to receive larger numbers of children and presumably of adult refugees from enemy oppression if facilities for additional imports of clothing and foodstuffs were granted. Accordingly, with the concurrence of the State Department and the Foreign Economic Administration, the Board asked Ambassador Winant in London to undertake to obtain from the appropriate British authorities prompt concurrence in the Board's position that definite assurances should be given to Turkey, Spain, and Portugal that additional food and clothing would be allowed through the blockade, subject to appropriate safeguards, in amounts sufficient to meet increased needs arising from their reception of refugees. In the case of Switzerland and Sweden, the proposed action was to be a renewal, in stronger terms, of Anglo-American assurances extended at the instigation of the State Department some time before the establishment of the Board.<sup>1/</sup>

On June 7, 1944, Ambassador Winant cabled that the British were prepared to instruct their representatives accordingly.<sup>2/</sup>

Following British approval of the proposed action, United States Missions in these five countries were asked to convey such assurances to the governments to which they were accredited. These governments were also to be assured that the United States and Great Britain would make every effort to arrange for the onward movement to other havens of such refugees as might be received.<sup>3/</sup>

The British Foreign Office subsequently indicated that British representatives had been directed to approach the five neutral governments concerned, acting in concert with United States representatives.<sup>4/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 3953 to London dated May 18, 1944, comprising document 477.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 4560 from London dated June 7, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 2259 to Bern dated July 3, 1944, comprising document 478 ; repeated in substance on the same date to Stockholm, Ankara, Madrid, and Lisbon.

<sup>4/</sup> Cable No. 5729 from London dated July 30, 1944, comprising document 479.

In response to the Board's request, Board Representative Hirschmann reported that following discussions on this score with his British colleague, both were of the opinion that at that particular time, joint action of the nature suggested would not achieve the desired purpose and might in fact result in the adoption of a less liberal policy than that then being pursued by the Turks. In place of making a formal approach, Representative Hirschmann and the British representative proposed to take advantage of the first appropriate opportunity in the course of other discussions, to emphasize the readiness of the United States and British Governments to assist Turkey, whenever it might become necessary, by arranging the onward movement of refugees to other havens and by making available food and other supplies as well as funds.<sup>1/</sup>

The United States Embassy in Madrid likewise deferred formal representations on the matter of transblockade relief inasmuch as the matter had been discussed with the Spanish Government in the course of previous representations on refugee aid in general. Moreover, the Embassy felt that the large quantities of food and other supplies sent to Spain from the United States during the preceding 18 months for the relief of refugees there, of which there were about 200 tons still available for distribution, were concrete indications of the willingness of this country to ease Spain's burdens.<sup>2/</sup>

#### GENERAL POLICY ON RELIEF IN NEUTRAL AND LIBERATED AREAS.

Throughout its existence the Board received numerous requests for financial assistance in relieving refugees both in neutral areas and in areas liberated by Allied military forces. The Board's position, however, was that such activities were not properly within its prescribed functions of rescuing and relieving victims of enemy oppression "in imminent danger of death." Requests limited to the relief and assistance of refugees in areas liberated from the Germans were therefore referred to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, to appropriate military authorities, to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, to private refugee organizations, and to other national or international groups authorized to deal with such problems.<sup>3/</sup> This interpretation of the Board's functions was not, however construed to limit its activities in connection with the removal of refugees from liberated areas where their presence served to discourage or prevent the rescue of additional refugees from enemy-occupied areas (as, for example, in the case of the evacuation of refugees from Southern

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 1287 from Ankara dated July 15, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2622 from Madrid dated July 28, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Circular Cable to Ankara, Stockholm, Lisbon, Caserta, London, and Bern, dated September 7, 1944, comprising document 224.

Italy to the emergency shelter at Oswego, New York<sup>1/</sup>, nor did it serve, after the military collapse of Germany, to interrupt the onward movement of parcels dispatched by the Board from the United States, on consignment to the International Red Cross, for distribution to civilian internees in enemy territory.<sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue to and through Italy.

<sup>2/</sup> See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

IV D - 1. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES

At the time the Board came into being the American Committee for Christian Refugees (which later became the American Christian Committee for Refugees) was carrying on a program of relief to refugees in Switzerland, the remittance of \$30,000 having been licensed by the Treasury for that purpose. In March 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, this license was amended to permit disbursements to help sustain the lives of endangered persons in France. Additional funds totaling \$119,500 were subsequently dispatched to Switzerland by the Committee for the continuation of this work in France and to carry on rescue and relief work in other enemy territory.1/

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.



IV D - 2. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Relief for Refugees in France. Upon the Board's recommendation, clearance from the London Blockade Committee was obtained with respect to two proposals on the part of the American Friends Service Committee involving the purchase in neutral countries of foodstuffs to be dispatched for the relief of particularly needy displaced persons and refugees in France.<sup>1/</sup> This clearance, to which the Foreign Economic Administration also lent its support, was based on condition that the proposed purchases in Portugal and Spain be subject to the usual controls as to kinds of goods procured and firms or intermediaries dealt with, and on condition that the proposed exports from Switzerland comply with current instructions to the United States Legation at Bern. Appropriate Treasury licenses were therefore issued in June 1944 permitting the transfer of \$25,000 to the American Friends' representative at Lisbon and \$25,000 to their representative in Switzerland.

In July 1944 the license covering the Friends' operations from Switzerland was amended in order to permit the purchase, from funds already remitted, of \$10,000 worth of French francs, to be acquired as prescribed by the Board's representative in Switzerland, for use in connection with general relief work in France.<sup>2/</sup> The remaining \$15,000 was used to purchase food parcels, as was the total amount remitted to Lisbon. Distribution of the foodstuffs purchased was handled by the International Red Cross.

Remittance to Sweden. In May 1944, upon the Board's recommendation, the Friends were licensed by the Treasury to send \$1,600 to Sweden for general refugee work there.

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 4046 to London dated May 22, 1944, and Cable No. 4227 from London dated May 25, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 2785 to Bern dated August 14, 1944.

IV D - 3. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

Funds Remitted to Switzerland for Red Cross Feeding Project. Shortly after its formation, the Board sent an urgent message to the International Red Cross indicating that it was prepared to see that funds were made available to the Red Cross at once to provide food and medicines for persecuted groups in German-occupied areas who were denied the facilities available to the rest of the population.<sup>1/</sup> After this message was sent, the Board learned that in December 1943 the Red Cross had proposed to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees that funds be placed at its disposal to carry out such a program in Rumania, Hungary, Croatia, and Slovakia, and in any other area where such relief action might be feasible, but the necessary funds had not been obtained.

The availability of private funds for such a program was meanwhile explored by the Board, as a result of which the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee <sup>2/</sup> indicated its willingness to make \$100,000 available to the Red Cross, to be used for the purchase of food and other supplies in neutral countries and in Rumania and Hungary. At the Board's request, a Treasury license was issued to the Committee in February 1944 permitting the remittance of \$100,000 to the International Red Cross to finance its feeding program in Rumania, Hungary, Croatia and Slovakia.

The Board then advised the Red Cross of this action, asking it to report developments and to indicate what other assistance might be needed to carry out this and similar operations.<sup>3/</sup>

1/ Cable No. 279 to Bern dated January 27, 1944.

2/ A few weeks before the creation of the Board the Joint Distribution Committee had been licensed by the Treasury to finance rescue and relief operations in enemy territory through its own representatives abroad, to the extent of \$200,000.

3/ Cable No. 437 to Bern dated February 9, 1944, comprising document 480.

At the same time Ambassador Winant in London was asked to advise the Intergovernmental Committee of what had been done in the matter.<sup>1/</sup> Although the Intergovernmental Committee had previously indicated that it wished to act as intermediary for transmitting both public and private funds to the Red Cross in order that it might supervise the spending of the money and the observance of the conditions imposed by the license, Ambassador Winant was asked to advise the Committee that no such arrangement seemed warranted and that as a matter of policy the licensing of private funds from the United States for refugee projects would continue to be handled by the Treasury Department upon approval of the project by the Board.

Minister Harrison subsequently transmitted details as to how the Red Cross proposed to spend the funds provided; food parcels, pharmaceutical projects, and clothes were to be bought in Rumania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Switzerland and distributed to Jewish refugees in Transnistria, Theresienstadt, Cracow, Holland, and Upper Silesia.<sup>2/</sup> Following the receipt of this information, the Joint Distribution Committee delegated full authority to the Red Cross with respect to use of the funds provided. In view of fears expressed by the Red Cross that any publicity concerning these efforts would result in German measures to thwart the entire program of relief to persecuted groups in Axis territory,<sup>3/</sup> the Joint Distribution Committee agreed that no attempt would be made to publicize its role as underwriter.<sup>4/</sup>

Report Received on Relief Afforded by Red Cross. In the program subsequently carried on by Red Cross delegates, funds were sent to Rumania for the purchase of food and clothing and for financial relief to Jewish refugees there, especially returning Transnistria deportees;<sup>5/</sup> food shipments, both collective and in parcels, were made to Theresienstadt, Birkenau, and Bergen-Belsen, and to Cracow and Budapest; and medical supplies were shipped to Bergen-Belsen, to the Jewish community at Zagreb, to camps in Croatia, and to Theresienstadt, Birkenau, and Cracow.<sup>6/</sup>

1/ Cable No. 1020 to London dated February 9, 1944.

2/ Cables No. 1334 and 1366 from Bern dated March 4 and 6, 1944, comprising documents 481 and 482.

3/ Cable No. 995 from Bern dated February 17, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 916 to Bern dated March 20, 1944, comprising document 483.

5/ See Rescue from Rumania.

6/ Cable No. 8044 from Bern dated December 9, 1944, comprising document 458.

Other Feeding Programs Undertaken from Switzerland. In February 1944 the Joint Distribution Committee was licensed to send a total of \$36,000 for the purchase of food parcels in Switzerland for distribution by the International Red Cross to specific internees at Theresienstadt and elsewhere in Czechoslovakia.

In December 1944 a further remittance of \$100,000 was made by the Committee to Saly Mayer, its representative in Switzerland, for the purchase of additional food supplies of Swiss origin for general distribution to internees in enemy territory.

Relief to Refugees in Shanghai. The remittance by the Committee over a period of a year of an aggregate of \$715,000 through Switzerland for the relief of refugees stranded in Shanghai was also licensed by the Treasury.<sup>1/</sup> In April 1945 application was made by the Committee for permission to dispatch food parcels on an experimental basis for the relief of these refugees in Shanghai. Treasury approval was subsequently obtained for the remittance of \$1,000 to Sweden for this purpose.

Relief Supplied through Portugal. Early in 1944 the Board was advised by private sources that some 18,000 Jews were confined in concentration camps in the Netherlands, where their lives were in danger because of insufficient food. In view of these reports, the Joint Distribution Committee in February 1944 sought Board approval of its application for a license to send funds to Portugal for the purchase of food there for distribution to internees in these camps in the Netherlands. After certain delays encountered at the Foreign Economic Administration were brought to the Board's attention, the Board was instrumental in having the matter cleared there and with the Netherlands Embassy. Arrangements were then made for immediate issuance by the Treasury of an appropriate license covering remittances totaling \$72,000.

Another license issued to the Joint Distribution Committee in April 1944 permitted the remittance of \$5,000 to Lisbon for the purchase in Portugal of food for individual parcels to be distributed to internees in enemy territory. This license enabled the Committee to send food parcels on an experimental basis to internees at Bergen-Belsen near Hannover, Germany.

Funds Remitted to Turkey. In July 1944 the Joint Distribution Committee was licensed by the Treasury to remit \$100,000 to Turkey

<sup>1/</sup> See also Rescue to and through Switzerland and Projects of Private Organizations: Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee and Jewish Labor Committee.



for the purchase of food parcels to be distributed by the Red Cross to internees in enemy territory, particularly in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania, including the Transnistrian area. The remittance of an additional \$50,000 was authorized shortly thereafter to cover the cost of feeding and transporting refugees from Turkey to Palestine.

Relief in Albania. In February 1945, at the Board's request, the Treasury licensed the sending of \$10,000 by the Joint Distribution Committee to its representatives in Albania, to be used to provide emergency assistance to 300 refugees in Tirana, Albania.

Relief to Jews in Rome. Substantial relief also was afforded through the Vatican to the Jewish community in Rome as the result of arrangements made by the Joint Distribution Committee.1/

Combined Rescue and Relief Operations. In addition to its remittances abroad for outright relief, substantial funds were made available by the Joint Distribution Committee for rescue and incidental relief activities licensed by the Treasury at the request of the Board. The Committee was licensed by the Treasury to remit a total of \$12,728,000 to Switzerland for combined rescue and relief work carried on by Committee representatives in France, Rumania, Hungary, Slovakia, the Balkans, and throughout enemy territory in general.2/ The remittance of \$25,000 to the Committee's representative in Lisbon was licensed for the purpose of carrying out certain projected rescues from southern France and for relief needs incidental to such evacuations.3/ Remittance to Spain totaling \$150,000 were authorized for such rescue and relief work.4/ Funds totaling \$100,000 were sent to Stockholm for Hungarian rescue and relief operations carried on under the direction of the Board's representative in Sweden,5/ in addition to \$5,000 dispatched by the Committee for the maintenance of Finnish refugees in Sweden.6/ Remittances to Italy totaling \$341,000 were authorized for combined rescue and relief activities, \$291,000 of this amount being for straight relief purposes in Northern and Southern Italy and on behalf of endangered persons in hiding in Yugoslavia itself.7/

1/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

2/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

3/ See Rescue to and through Portugal.

4/ See Rescue to and through Spain.

5/ See Rescue from Hungary.

6/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

7/ See Rescue to and through Italy.

Treasury licenses issued upon the recommendation of the Board also permitted the Joint Distribution Committee to reimburse the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to the extent of \$641,353 for expenses incurred in evacuating refugees from the Balkans to Palestine.

IV D-4. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN RELIEF FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Shortly after the Board was set up, it learned that since June of 1943 two labor groups had been attempting, without success, to secure the allocation of funds for rescue and relief to United Czechoslovak Relief (subsequently American Relief for Czechoslovakia) and to another private relief agency,<sup>1/</sup> both of which were members of the National War Fund and entitled to consideration in the latter's allocations. The American Federation of Labor through the Labor League for Human Rights and the Congress of Industrial Organizations through its War Relief Committee jointly had a call upon the use of \$1,000,000 of the amount held by the National War Fund in its contingencies account. Although neither group was a member of the War Fund, a right to make recommendations had been acquired by virtue of their substantial contributions to the Fund.

Up until February of 1944 these labor groups had not been able to secure the allocations in which they were interested because the National War Fund could not make special appropriations without the approval of the President's War Relief Control Board, and that agency had in turn been unwilling to approve programs that did not lend themselves to the strict accounting and reportorial requirements which the War Relief Control Board had set up for its own guidance.

Following discussions between representatives of both Boards, these difficulties were resolved in a letter addressed to the War Refugee Board under date of February 12, 1944, in which the President's War Relief Control Board indicated that it was prepared to give clearance to both of the allocations proposed "immediately upon receipt of notice from the War Refugee Board that the projects can be carried out under their authorization and, as required by the Executive Order establishing the President's War Relief Control Board, in conformity with foreign policies as determined by the Secretary of State."<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Projects of Private Organizations: American Relief for Norway.

<sup>2/</sup> Letter from the President's War Relief Control Board dated February 12, 1944, comprising document 484.

Detailed proposals with respect to rescue and relief in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in enemy territory were subsequently presented to the Board by the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the Board in turn expedited the release of the funds required to put the various programs into action.<sup>1/</sup>

Thus in March 1944, at the Board's request, American Relief for Czechoslovakia was licensed by the Treasury to remit to Great Britain \$150,000 obtained from the National War Fund for combined rescue and relief operations in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France. In October 1944 the remittance of an additional \$200,000 was authorized for this purpose.<sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> In addition to the Czechoslovakian and Norwegian projects, funds were eventually obtained from the National War Fund for rescue and relief in Poland (see Projects of Private Organizations: Polish War Fund), in Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands (see Projects of Private Organizations: Belgian War Relief, Friends of Luxembourg, and the Queen Wilhelmina Fund), and for additional operations in France (see Projects of Private Organizations: The French Relief Fund).

<sup>2/</sup> See Rescue from Czechoslovakia.



IV D - 5. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN RELIEF FOR NORWAY

Early in 1944 arrangements were made by the Board, in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, for the allocation by the President's War Relief Control Board of funds from the National War Fund to cover certain Norwegian rescue and relief activities and for the relief of refugees in Sweden.<sup>1/</sup> At the Board's request, the Treasury subsequently licensed the sending to Stockholm of a total of \$400,000 for these operations. A second Norwegian project was meanwhile initiated from Sweden under the direction of the Board's representative there, for which the remittance of \$120,000 was authorized.<sup>2/</sup>

1/ For a discussion of circumstances leading to these arrangements see Projects of Private Organizations: American Relief for Czechoslovakia.

2/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

IV D - 6. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

BELGIAN WAR RELIEF

In June 1944 the Board in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations made arrangements for the allocation by the President's War Relief Control Board of funds from the National War Fund to cover certain projected rescue and relief operations in enemy territory, primarily for the benefit of Belgian nationals. Funds totaling \$115,000 were authorized by Treasury license to be remitted to Switzerland for these activities.1/

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

IV D - 7. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

BOARD OF NATIONAL MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In June and July 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, Treasury licenses were issued authorizing the remittance to Stockholm of a total of \$15,000 for combined rescue and relief work in enemy territory under the direction of the Board's representative in Sweden. These funds were used primarily for the relief of Hebrew Christians in dire need in Hungary. The money was provided by the Board of Missions at the request of the War Refugee Board which had been advised of the special needs of this group of refugees by its Special Representative in Stockholm.1/

1/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

IV D - 8. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO SAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF EUROPE

In June 1944 the Emergency Committee To Save the Jewish People of Europe was licensed by the Treasury to send \$5,000 to Turkey for certain combined rescue and relief activities in enemy territory to be undertaken under the direction of the Board's representative in Turkey.1/

1/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.



IV D - 9. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

FRENCH RELIEF FUND

With the approval of the Board, the French Relief Fund in June 1944 was licensed by the Treasury to send \$150,000 to Great Britain to be used for combined rescue and relief operations on behalf of persecuted groups in enemy territory, particularly those of French nationality. Funds for these activities were allocated by the President's War Relief Control Board from the National War Fund at the request of the Board, in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.<sup>1/</sup>

1/ See Rescue Programs: Other Projects.

IV D - 10. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

FRIENDS OF LUXEMBOURG

As the result of arrangements made by the Board in June 1944 in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, funds were allocated by the President's War Relief Control Board from the National War Fund for combined rescue and relief activities, primarily on behalf of Luxembourg nationals in enemy territory. Treasury licenses subsequently obtained authorized remittances to Switzerland totaling \$45,000 for this purpose.1/

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

IV D - 11. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE AND RELIEF COMMITTEE

Relief to Spanish Republican Refugees in France. In February 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, the International Rescue and Relief Committee was licensed by the Treasury to remit funds totaling \$45,000 to Switzerland for the relief of large numbers of Spanish Republican refugees interned in southern France. These funds, as well as others remitted under a license issued in August 1944 authorizing the sending of an additional \$30,000, were dispensed under the direction of the Board's representative in Switzerland.

Combined Rescue and Relief Projects. Other licenses issued to the International Rescue and Relief Committee authorized the remittance to Switzerland of a total of \$150,000 for rescue and relief work in Axis territory, particularly in northern France;1/ \$35,000 for operations using Turkey as a base, to be expended under the direction of the Board's representative there;2/ and \$24,000 for rescue and relief activities directed by the Board's representative in Sweden.3/

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

2/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

3/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

IV D - 12. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

JEWISH LABOR COMMITTEE

Relief of Refugees in Shanghai. In May 1944 the Jewish Labor was licensed by the Treasury, upon the approval of the Board, to send \$5,000 to Shanghai through the Polish Legation in Bern for the relief of Polish nationals among the refugees stranded in Shanghai.<sup>1/</sup>

Combined Rescue and Relief Operations. In February 1944 the Jewish Labor Committee was licensed to send \$50,000 to Switzerland to be used to accomplish rescues from enemy territory and to sustain the lives of endangered persons pending such rescue.<sup>2/</sup> Two months later the Committee was licensed to send \$10,000 to Portugal for rescue and relief work being carried out from that country.<sup>3/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> See also Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Vaad Mahatzala Emergency Committee.

<sup>2/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

<sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Portugal.



IV D - 13. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

POALE ZION ORGANIZATION AND JEWISH NATIONAL WORKERS ALLIANCE

Treasury licenses issued in August 1944 to the Poale Zion Organization and the Jewish National Workers Alliance, jointly, authorized the remittance of \$18,000 to Switzerland <sup>1/</sup> and \$33,000 to Palestine for certain combined rescue and relief activities in enemy territory, including particularly the relief and transportation of refugees from neutral areas to which they had escaped, to Palestine.

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<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

IV D - 14. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

POLISH WAR RELIEF

Arrangements made by the Board in August 1944 in cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations resulted in the allocation by the President's War Relief Control Board of funds from the National War Fund to Polish War Relief for the purpose of carrying on certain combined rescue and relief operations, particularly on behalf of Polish nationals in enemy territory. Funds totaling \$400,000 were remitted to Great Britain for this purpose, pursuant to Treasury licenses; the remittance of an additional \$25,000 for the projected operations was made to Sweden, for expenditure under the direction of the Board's representative there.1/

1/ See Other Rescue Projects. Only \$50,000 of the funds remitted for the Polish War Relief rescue and relief project were utilized, due to difficulties encountered in conversion of the funds in Great Britain and in finding a satisfactory means of transferring the funds to Poland.

IV D - 15. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

THE QUEEN WILHELMINA FUND

Arrangements made by the Board in the summer of 1944 in co-operation with the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations resulted in the allocation by the President's War Relief Control Board of funds from the National War Fund to the Queen Wilhelmina Fund for the purpose of carrying on certain combined rescue and relief work, particularly on behalf of Dutch nationals in enemy territory. Treasury licenses were subsequently obtained for the remittance of a total of \$215,000 to Board Representative McClelland in Switzerland for this purpose.<sup>1/</sup> The local currency equivalent of \$165,000 of this amount was made available to responsible labor groups in Holland by the Netherlands Government-in-Exile per arrangements made in London between that government and representatives of the sponsoring labor groups in this country. Upon receipt of adequate assurances given by the Netherlands Government through the Netherlands Embassy in Washington that the local currency equivalent had been made available in Holland, the Board authorized Board Representative McClelland to pay the Swiss franc equivalent of \$165,000 to the Dutch Minister in Bern as payment to the Dutch Government for the advances made.<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 317 to Bern dated January 17, 1945.

IV D - 16. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

SELFHELP OF EMIGRÉS FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

In February 1944, following approval by the Board of the projected operations, a Treasury license was issued to an organization known as Selfhelp of Emigrés from Central Europe authorizing the necessary communication with enemy territory and the remittance of funds for the purpose of initiating certain combined rescue and relief operations. In all, remittances to Switzerland totaling \$40,000 were authorized for these activities.<sup>1/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Rescue to and through Switzerland.



IV D - 17. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

UNITARIAN SERVICE COMMITTEE

Relief of Refugees in Switzerland. In February 1944, at the Board's request, a Treasury license was issued to the Unitarian Service Committee permitting it to send \$51,000 to Switzerland for the purpose of affording relief to refugees from Nazi oppression who had succeeded in reaching Swiss soil.

Medical Aid to Refugees in France. A second relief project undertaken by the Unitarian Service Committee was the organization of medical aid for refugees in France. Toward this end, a Treasury license was granted the Unitarians in March 1944, authorizing the remittance of \$30,000 for the projected operations.<sup>1/</sup>

Combined Rescue and Relief Work. In August 1944 the Unitarians were licensed to undertake certain combined rescue and relief operations in enemy territory, particularly in Italy, Hungary, and the Balkans; the remittance to Turkey of \$30,000 was authorized for this purpose.<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 851 to Bern dated March 15, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> See Rescue to and through Turkey.

IV D - 18. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis  
of the United States and Canada

Relief to Refugees in Shanghai.<sup>1/</sup> Early in 1944 application was made by the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis for a Treasury license to send funds through Switzerland to Shanghai for the relief of a rabbinical group there. In March 1944, with the Board's approval, the Committee was licensed to remit \$50,000 for the immediate needs of this group. Arrangements were made in April 1944 whereby further remittances were to be effected through the Polish Legation in Bern; in subsequent months funds totaling \$188,100 were dispatched via this channel.

Feeding Project Undertaken from Tangier. In March 1944 a Treasury license was issued at the Board's request to the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee for the purchase in Tangier, Morocco, of food parcels for distribution among Jewish internees in concentration camps, primarily in Czechoslovakia and Poland. This project was later expanded to include relief to internees in camps in Hungary as well. Remittances to Morocco totaling \$19,000 were authorized in this connection.<sup>2/</sup>

For a period 500-gram parcels were sent from Tangier through the Spanish post office, addressed to hundreds of persons interned at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia and at Birkenau in Poland. Other parcels managed to reach refugees in hiding in Belgium, Holland, and France. Individual receipts were received from Theresienstadt indicating that the individuals to whom the packages had been addressed had been the recipients. Although return receipts from Birkenau were prohibited, word received through underground channels gave reasonable assurance that bona fide internees had actually received the parcels addressed to Birkenau.<sup>3/</sup>

- 1/ See also Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Jewish Labor Committee.  
2/ Cables No. 43 and 125 to Tangier dated April 6 and September 2, 1944, and Cable No. 7 dated January 10, 1945.  
3/ Dispatch No. 2042 from Tangier dated April 10, 1944, comprising document 485.

When the Hungarian situation became worse, responsibility for the distribution of these food parcels to Jews in concentration camps in Hungary was assumed by the International Red Cross, which had previously been of assistance in effecting the shipment of some of the relief supplies through Sweden.1/

Since the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was likewise sending food parcels to Theresienstadt,2/ the names of the recipients of the Vaad Hahatzala food parcels were checked at the Board's request through the United States Legation in Lisbon against the list of Joint Distribution Committee recipients in order to avoid any possible duplication.3/

Relief of Liberated Rabbinical Groups. In October 1944, following the liberation by Soviet armies of substantial areas of Balkan territory, the Vaad Hahatzala sought and obtained a Treasury license authorizing the remittance of \$5,200 to the Soviet Union to provide for the relief of liberated Rabbinical groups in Lithuania, Poland and Russia.

Clearance Obtained for Shipment of Passover Bread to Bergen-Belsen. In February 1945 representatives of the Vaad Hahatzala sought Board assistance in effecting the delivery of matzos to Jewish internees at Bergen-Belsen. Difficulty had been encountered in connection with the proposed purchase of 10,000 kilos of flour in Switzerland to be used for the proposed program, Swiss authorities having insisted that the purchase could not be effected until assurances were received that a corresponding amount of flour would be made available for import. Following discussions held by representatives of the Board with the State Department and the Foreign Economic Administration, and after clearance with appropriate United States officials then in Switzerland, a replacement guarantee was made to the Swiss and the proposed shipment of matzos was eventually made.4/

Combined Rescue and Relief Operations Also Undertaken. In January 1944, immediately before the creation of the Board, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis was licensed to undertake a broad program of rescue and relief in enemy territory, the remittance to Switzerland of \$100,000 having been authorized in this connection. Upon

1/ Cable No. 295 from Tangier dated September 26, 1944.

2/ See Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

3/ Cable No. 47 to Tangier dated April 14, 1944, and Airgram No. A-76 from Tangier dated May 3, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 731 to Bern dated February 17, 1945.

the recommendation of the Board, additional remittances for these combined rescue and relief operations totaling \$600,000 were subsequently authorized by the Treasury.1/

In March 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, the Vaad Hahatzala was licensed by the Treasury to send \$25,000 to Turkey for rescue operations in enemy territory and for relief activities incidental to such efforts.2/ Three months later a \$10,000 remittance was authorized to Stockholm for further rescue and relief activities particularly in the Baltic countries, under the direction of the Board's representative in Sweden.3/

1/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

2/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

3/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.



IV D - 19. RELIEF PROGRAMS: PROJECTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

Relief of Italian Refugees in Switzerland. Upon the recommendation of the Board, the World Jewish Congress was licensed early in April 1944 to send \$8,010 to its representative in Geneva for the relief of Italian refugees in Switzerland. These funds had been made available to the World Jewish Congress by the Italian Jewish community of Rio de Janeiro. The remittance of an additional \$4,000 made available by the Italian Jewish community of Sao Paulo was authorized in May 1944.

Parcels Sent to Internees from Sweden. In October 1944, in keeping with the Berle-Foote agreement authorizing such undertakings,<sup>1/</sup> United States and British blockade authorities approved the shipment of 93 tons of food parcels from Sweden to unassimilated persons at Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt, and in other concentration camps in German-controlled areas.<sup>2/</sup> These parcels made available by the World Jewish Congress, were distributed under the supervision of the Swedish Young Men's Christian Association.

Assistance in Distribution of Board Parcels from Sweden. Efforts were begun early in 1945 to obtain blockade approval and to make other arrangements for an expansion of the feeding program undertaken by the World Jewish Congress from Sweden, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee having indicated that it would underwrite the cost of such an expansion.<sup>3/</sup> In view of the time that would have been required to procure and package such foodstuffs and in view of the serious difficulties then being encountered by the International Red Cross in effecting distribution of the Board's food parcels from Switzerland as the result of military developments in Germany and the general breakdown of internal transportation facilities, Board Representative

1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

2/ Cable No. 8097 from London dated September 28, 1944, and Cable No. 8244 to London dated October 7, 1944.

3/ Cables No. 2070 and 2769 to London dated March 17 and April 10, 1945.

McClelland in March 1945 authorized the release to representatives of the World Jewish Congress in Sweden of a group of 40,000 kosher food parcels from among the Board's stocks at Gothenburg, to be used for the same general purposes for which the proposed expansion had been sought. Except for a limited number of individually addressed parcels sent through parcel post channels, actual distribution of these parcels was effected through the Swedish Red Cross under the usual distribution guarantees required by the Board.1/

Combined Rescue and Relief Operations. In addition to sending these funds for outright relief, the World Jewish Congress was licensed by the Treasury during the first half of 1944 to remit an aggregate of \$225,000 for combined rescue and relief operations in enemy territory carried on from Switzerland by Congress representatives.2/

In May 1944, following approval by the Board of the proposed operations, the World Jewish Congress was licensed to remit \$50,000 to Lisbon to be used under the direction of the Board's representative there for combined rescue and relief work.3/

In June 1944, upon the recommendation of the Board, the World Jewish Congress was granted a license permitting the remittance of \$10,000 to Stockholm to be used under the direction of the Board's representative there for combined rescue and relief work in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania.4/

1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

2/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

3/ See Rescue to and through Portugal.

4/ See Rescue to and through Sweden.

V A. COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS: GREAT BRITAIN

Promptly after the establishment of the Board steps were taken to make clear to the British that the creation of the Board represented this Government's determination to carry out effectively and without further delay the policy previously agreed upon by the two governments to take all possible measures for the speedy rescue and relief of the victims of enemy persecution. At the Board's request,<sup>1/</sup> Ambassador Winant conferred with the British on the possibility of their implementing the Board's program through such a statement as that released by President Roosevelt and through instructions to British representatives in the various countries comparable to those sent by the United States to its Missions upon the creation of the Board.

The British Foreign Office in the course of these discussions replied that it expected to inform its representatives, particularly in countries where the refugee question was active, of the instructions sent to United States Missions on refugee matters, and that British representatives would be instructed to cooperate in the matter. In connection with a question that had arisen in the House of Commons as to whether the British likewise intended to set up a refugee board, the Foreign Office indicated that it was unlikely that the British would make such a move inasmuch as a Cabinet Committee on Refugees was already in existence (though its composition had not yet been made public).<sup>2/</sup>

On February 11, 1944, Ambassador Winant relayed to the Board the substance of conversations with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and referred to a statement by the latter in Parliament reaffirming the British Government's "earnest desire and practical intention of associating themselves with the United States Government and with the War Refugee Board in particular, in endeavoring to carry out the aims which the President has set before it." Mr. Eden reiterated, however, that the British did not consider it necessary to set up any additional organization for this purpose.<sup>3/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 774 to London dated January 31, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1006 from London dated February 5, 1944.

<sup>3/</sup> Cable No. 1181 from London dated February 11, 1944.

Later in February, in the course of a debate in the House of Commons on the question of funds for the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, critics of the Intergovernmental Committee favored the establishment of a British agency comparable to the Board. The British Government took the position that while an international body could handle some matters better than the agency of any one nation, there was a field for national action in these matters; it was therefore pleased at the establishment of the Board and voiced the intention of giving it its "very warmest support and sympathy." The conviction was reiterated, however, that the establishment of a comparable British agency was unnecessary in view of the existence of a cabinet committee already concerned with such matters. Constitutional objections to the establishment of such a board were also suggested.1/

Views of Board Sought on Proposed Appeal to British Government. On February 24, 1944, Ambassador Winant informed the Board that various Jewish organizations in Great Britain as well as a committee of members of Parliament were said to be eager to approach the British Government for permission to carry on and finance operations similar to those being authorized by this Government for rescue work in occupied countries. Inquiry was made of Ambassador Winant as to whether the British Government had been officially informed of the issuance by the Treasury Department of licenses covering such operations and whether the Board had any objection to an appeal to the British Government by Jewish or other organizations there, using the precedent of the Treasury licenses as an argument.2/

The Board replied that it had in preparation a statement (subsequently forwarded 3/) formally advising the British, among other things, of the details of this Government's licensing policy with respect to rescue and relief operations in enemy and occupied territories. On the matter of the proposed appeals to the British Government on the part of Jewish or other private organizations, the Board expressed the hope that the British Government would welcome such appeals and that the private British agencies would press their government for permission to carry on and finance the type of rescue and relief operations being permitted by the United States Government.4/

Discussions with the British re Licensing. Late in February 1944 concern was expressed by the British Embassy in Washington to

- 1/ Cable No. 1711 from London dated March 2, 1944.
- 2/ Cable No. 1541 from London dated February 24, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 2303 to London dated March 25, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 2033 to London dated March 17, 1944.



the State Department over the financial aspects of this Government's licensing of purchases by the International Red Cross in enemy territory, with funds supplied by a private agency,<sup>1/</sup> in the interest of sustaining lives pending the accomplishment of actual rescue. In view of this protest, the State Department urgently advised the Board that all proposed future relief transactions of this type be cleared in their "economic warfare aspects" not only with the Foreign Economic Administration but with the British Government.<sup>2/</sup> In response, the Board, mindful of interim delays encountered in such clearances in the past, pointed out in a letter to the State Department that operations in this field had been in accordance with a policy of the United States Government that had been established for some time; that although the Board intended not only to keep the British informed of what it did but also to give consideration to any objections they might have, it did not contemplate clearing its programs with them, especially since that had not been its procedure in this field in the past.<sup>3/</sup> An informal conference was subsequently held between Board representatives and Mr. Thorold of the British Embassy to explain the licensing policy of this Government and to affirm the Board's intentions to carry out the solemn duty assigned to it in the President's Executive Order.

Following these informal talks, Ambassador Halifax submitted an Aide Memoire to Secretary of State Hull on March 28, 1944, setting forth the formal British objections to this Government's new licensing policy with respect to the financing of refugee relief and rescue operations in enemy territory.<sup>4/</sup> The British position was that the licenses issued by this Government afforded the enemy an opportunity to acquire foreign exchange for use in the prosecution of the war. The British proposed as an alternative to our system of licensing, that consideration be given to requiring all such operations to be financed by local borrowings in enemy territory against guarantees of post-war repayment. The State Department with the concurrence of the Board and the Treasury Department, replied in a formal Aide Memoire that this Government had concluded that the saving of lives far outweighed any danger involved in permitting the enemy to acquire relatively insubstantial quantities of foreign exchange and further, that this Government intended

- 1/ See Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
- 2/ Letter from the State Department to the Board dated March 4, 1944 (enclosing copy of letter to the State Department from the British Embassy dated February 29, 1944, and copy of letter to the British Embassy from the State Department dated March 4, 1944), comprising document 486
- 3/ Letter to the State Department dated March 16, 1944, comprising document 487.
- 4/ British Embassy Aide Memoire dated March 27, 1944, comprising document 488.

to continue to follow the licensing policy it had been pursuing for several months. The State Department concluded with the hope that the British Government would decide to adopt a similar policy in connection with authorizing and encouraging the sending of funds by private organizations to neutral countries for the relief and rescue of victims of enemy oppression.1/

Despite the position taken by this Government, the British continued to voice the fear that funds transmitted under certain Treasury licenses for evacuation operations might benefit the enemy. They stressed the British view as to the undesirability of granting, without prior consultation with the British, licenses on terms cutting across "agreed" blockade policy and again pressed for the adoption of their suggestion that all such operations be financed under their credit scheme.2/

Later, the Board was furnished with a copy of a letter addressed to the United States Embassy in London by the British Ministry of Economic Warfare under date of May 11, 1944, asking confirmation of the Ministry's understanding that under the terms of United States Treasury licenses covering refugee rescue and relief operations, the Board was authorizing the expenditure of hard currencies in occupied countries only when "strictly necessary to secure assistance in effecting actual rescues, and that it is not authorized for the purchase of relief supplies in enemy territory."3/

Amount of Free Currency Sent into Enemy Territory. The British continued to press their objections despite repeated statements from this Government that its policy was clear and well established concerning these humanitarian operations. Representatives of the British Embassy in Washington in June 1944 requested information from the Board concerning the amount of free currency being sent into enemy territory under the licenses issued by the Treasury upon the Board's recommendation. As of June 1, 1944, the Board revealed, the total amount authorized by the Treasury for such operations was \$2,088,100. The Board advised the British representative that although this was the total amount authorized to be remitted to neutral countries, on the basis of reports then available to the Board it appeared that only a small fraction of the total amount authorized had been used in enemy territory.4/ Cables

1/ State Department Aide Memoire to the British Embassy, undated, comprising document 489 .

2/ Dispatch No. 15061 from London dated April 17, 1944.

3/ Airgram No. A-621 from London dated May 16, 1944.

4/ Letter to the British Embassy from the Board dated June 29, 1944.

were subsequently sent to the United States Missions concerned,<sup>1/</sup> and the reports received in response to these specific inquiries confirmed the fact that only small amounts of free currency had actually been sent into enemy territory.<sup>2/</sup>

Special Representative Named for Great Britain. For some time consideration had been given by the Board to the desirability of appointing a Special Representative for Great Britain, various individuals having been considered for the contemplated post. Following the receipt of a report from a Treasury representative who returned from London in August 1944, the Board concluded that the time had come for the stationing of a Special Representative in London. Accordingly, James Mann, an Assistant Executive Director of the Board, went to London on August 31 to confer with Ambassador Winant and members of the Embassy staff, and with the Intergovernmental Committee;<sup>3/</sup> he was later named Special Representative of the Board in England with the designation by the State Department as Special Attache on war refugee matters.<sup>4/</sup>

Matter of License Clearance Reopened by British. In the fall of 1944 the British began to press anew for assurances on the part of the United States that licenses authorizing the expenditure of funds in enemy territory be cleared with the British. As a result of these new efforts, the Joint Anglo-American Relief Committee, meeting in London, embodied in its report of October 3, 1944, a recommendation that "licenses which involve or may involve the placing of funds in neutral territory at the disposal of enemy persons should only be issued after consultation between the United States and British Governments." <sup>5/</sup>

Despite this recommendation, no action was taken to modify the procedure already being followed by the United States with respect to such licenses, since it was the consensus of the United States agencies involved that to acquiesce in the matter would be to pave the way for endless delays in rescue and relief efforts already overburdened with time-consuming difficulties.

- 1/ Cable No. 2241 to Bern dated July 1, 1944; repeated in substance on the same date to Lisbon, Stockholm, and Ankara.
- 2/ Cable No. 136 from Ankara dated June 21, 1944; Cable No. 2481 from Stockholm dated July 5, 1944; Cable No. 4748 from Bern dated July 24, 1944; and Cable No. 5078 from Bern dated August 7, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 7035 to London dated August 31, 1944.
- 4/ Cable No. 8341 to London dated October 10, 1944, comprising document 490; see also Cable No. 8776 from London dated October 16, 1944.
- 5/ Airgram No. A-1211 from London dated October 6, 1944, comprising document 491.

British Cooperation Obtained in other Matters. Although the British never agreed to join in this Government's licensing policy and aggressive program to save victims of enemy oppression, they did give assistance and requisite approvals to certain of the Board's programs and projects, but in most cases only after considerable pressure from this Government. For example, British agreement was obtained for the Board's program to send food from the United States to unassimilated persons in enemy territory and for private agency programs to send food into enemy areas from neutral countries.1/ The British also agreed to join this Government in permitting relief supplies through the blockade to neutral countries cooperating in war refugee rescue and relief.2/

British cooperation was also obtained at the Board's insistence in the issuance within quota limitations, of Palestine certificates to endangered persons within enemy territory and to many escaping to neutral soil.3/ Several German-British exchanges involving Palestine certificate holders from German-controlled territory were accomplished by the British via diplomatic channels.4/

In connection with efforts made to extend protection via diplomatic channels to persons in enemy territory holding passports or other papers issued in the name of Latin American republics, the British cooperated by supporting requests made of the various Latin American governments by the United States, asking that the validity of these papers not be denied until such time as their bearers were able to escape Nazi jurisdiction.5/

The British also joined this Government, at our insistence, in a public acceptance of the so-called Horthy offer to release to the British and American governments Jews from Hungary.6/

In June 1944 British agreement was finally obtained to a recommendation made by the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 and subsequently repeatedly urged by the Board, calling for the joint establishment and maintenance of a temporary refugee shelter at

- 1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program and Projects of Private Organizations.
- 2/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.
- 3/ See especially Rescue to and through Turkey, Rescue through Italy, Rescue from Hungary, and Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: Palestine.
- 4/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.
- 5/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Documents.
- 6/ See Rescue from Hungary.



Cyrenaica in North Africa. Expansion of existing refugee camps under the direction of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, however, obviated the need for proceeding with the Cyrenaica project.1/

In various other instances where it was felt that the support of the British would be helpful, particularly in connection with the psychological warfare efforts of the Board, the British responded favorably to the Board's invitation that parallel action be taken in order that the lives of innocent victims of the Nazi regime might be saved.2/

1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.  
2/ See Psychological Warfare Programs.

## V B. COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS: THE SOVIET UNION

Although the Board did not anticipate that the Soviet Union would be able actually to receive war refugees from other war-torn countries in view of the enormous refugee problem which Russia herself faced in connection with the millions of Soviet citizens who had been impoverished and displaced by the German invasion,<sup>1/</sup> efforts were made to solicit the cooperation of the Soviet Government in general terms and in connection with certain shipping negotiations related to rescue projects on which the Board's representative was at work in Turkey.<sup>2/</sup> Toward these ends Ambassador Harriman in Moscow addressed a memorandum to Soviet Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Vyshinski requesting Russian safe-conduct for a vessel which the Board proposed to use for evacuations from the Balkans <sup>3/</sup> and outlining parallel action which both the United States and the Soviet Union might take in trying to impress on Germany and the satellite countries the fact that they would be held accountable for inhuman actions against the Jews and other minority groups.<sup>4/</sup>

Russian aid was later solicited in connection with the Board's psychological warfare efforts, particularly in the campaign to bring pressure to bear on the governments of the satellite countries, notably Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, to desist from their persecution of innocent minorities.<sup>5/</sup>

Throughout the Board's existence efforts were made to keep the Soviet Government informed as to general measures undertaken at the instigation of this Government looking toward the rescue and relief of victims of enemy persecution. In addition, efforts were made to keep the Soviet Government advised of special measures such as the delicate negotiations in Turkey, Switzerland and Sweden for the discussion of German proposals to release Jews.<sup>6/</sup> The

1/ Cable No. 775 from Moscow dated March 9, 1944, comprising document 492.

2/ Cables No. 554 and 555 to Moscow dated March 11, 1944, comprising documents 493 and 494.

3/ The requested safe-conduct was subsequently granted. See Rescue to and through Turkey.

4/ Cable No. 1020 from Moscow dated March 24, 1944.

5/ See Psychological Warfare Programs.

6/ See Special Negotiations.

Soviet attitude toward negotiations of this type was firmly stated in a note of June 18, 1944, to the American Embassy in Moscow stating that the Soviet Government "does not consider it permissible or expedient to carry on any conversations whatsoever with the German Government."1/

Wherever the occasion warranted, as in the case of final rescue efforts made in Rumanian territory,2/ Soviet assistance was solicited in specific terms, though, for security or other reasons the desired results were not always forthcoming.

1/ Cable No. 2184 from Moscow dated June 19, 1944.

2/ See Rescue from Rumania.

## V C. COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS: THE EUROPEAN NEUTRALS

Although Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal had all, prior to the creation of the Board, opened their doors to limited numbers of persons fleeing from Nazi-occupied territory, it was not until the Board through the United States Missions in these various countries gave assurances with respect to relief through the Blockade proportionate to the number of refugees received 1/ and substantial guarantees as to assistance in the maintenance of these refugees and as to their ultimate evacuation or repatriation 2/ that large numbers of endangered persons were enabled to reach the safety of neutral soil.

All of the neutral countries served in varying degrees as the source of substantial quantities of food purchased by the International Red Cross or by private organizations licensed by the Treasury Department, upon the recommendation of the Board, to carry on rescue and relief programs in enemy territory.3/

The neutral countries were also especially valuable in connection with the Board's psychological warfare programs, including the transmission, both through official and unofficial channels, of appeals designed to induce Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, as well as the Germans themselves, to halt their barbaric persecutions.4/

Switzerland, serving not only as the protecting power of this Government in dealing with the Germans but also on behalf of most of the Latin American countries, and Spain, as the protecting power of Bolivia and Paraguay, were particularly helpful in the program undertaken by the Board whereby protection was extended

- 1/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.
- 2/ See Rescue to and through Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal for detailed accounts of the manner in which these various governments cooperated in rescue and relief operations with which the Board was concerned.
- 3/ See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations.
- 4/ See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through Neutral Countries.



to thousands of individuals in enemy territory holding passports and other travel documents issued in the name of various Latin American countries.1/

Other negotiations carried on with Spain and Portugal ultimately insured the recognition by those governments of Sephardics in Greece and elsewhere in enemy territory claiming Spanish and Portuguese nationality who otherwise faced deportation and possible death at the hands of the Nazis.2/ Somewhat similar representations were made to the Turkish Government with respect to several hundred Jews in France claiming Turkish citizenship, many of whom were eventually enabled to escape general deportation measures and proceed to Turkey.3/

- 1/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports and Exchange.
- 2/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Spanish Nationality and Recognition of Sephardics Claiming Portuguese Nationality.
- 3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Reinstatement of Turkish Citizenship to Certain Jewish Refugees.

#### V D. COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS: THE VATICAN

The cooperation of the Vatican in the Board's program of rescue and relief was both wholehearted and effective. Constant communication was had with Vatican circles through Ambassador Myron Taylor and Harold Tittman, American representatives at Vatican City, and through the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, as a result of which requests for specific action, as the occasion arose, were promptly made and acted upon. Thus, at the Board's request in connection with its psychological warfare programs, various appeals were addressed by the Vatican to authorities in Germany and the satellite countries in an attempt to halt deportations and other forms of persecution directed against Jews and other minority groups. When the Hungarian situation became particularly acute, a personal appeal for tolerance was addressed by Pope Pius XII to Hungarian Regent Horthy.<sup>1/</sup> From the United States Archbishop Francis Spellman addressed an impressive plea to the Catholics of Hungary, asking that they protect and help the persecuted.<sup>2/</sup>

Vatican cooperation was likewise obtained in helping afford relief to the Jewish community in Rome throughout the German occupation, the cost of these operations having been borne by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.<sup>3/</sup>

The Vatican was similarly helpful in transmitting and supporting the Board's request for alleviation of the lot of un-assimilated persons detained in enemy territory, at least to the extent of permitting them to receive relief parcels under the supervision of the International Red Cross.<sup>4/</sup>

Vatican support was also lent to the Board's efforts to insure protection to endangered persons in Axis territory holding Latin American papers.<sup>5/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> See Approaches to Germany and the Satellites To Halt Persecutions: Appeals through the Vatican.
- <sup>2/</sup> See Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.
- <sup>3/</sup> See Rescue to and through Italy.
- <sup>4/</sup> See Relief Programs: Efforts to Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.
- <sup>5/</sup> See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

Another instance of the invaluable assistance rendered through Vatican channels was courier service for the transmission of Palestine certificates authorized by the Jewish Agency for endangered persons in enemy territory, notably the relaying of such certificates from the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul to the Nunciature in Budapest to enable their emigration from Hungary.1/

Throughout the course of the war substantial amounts of money were placed by the Vatican at the disposal of the Bishops of Hungary for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings of persecuted minorities.2/

Perhaps the most unusual means of extending protection to endangered persons in enemy-controlled territory were the efforts of the Catholic Church to save lives by means of conversion to Christianity. Nazi attempts to oppose these measures met with the response that the church had authority to baptize immediately any person who was in imminent danger of death. When the situation in Hungary grew more critical, groups of Hungarian Nazis entered churches and broke up religious classes being held for Jews, with the result that many baptisms took place in Hungarian air raid shelters, where hundreds were baptized.3/

Conversion to Christianity did not, however, permanently exempt persons of Jewish descent from Nazi persecution. Discriminatory and deportation measures were generally extended to such converts in short order, as well as to partners of mixed marriages and individuals who had been Christians from birth and whose families had been Christian for generations.

- 1/ Cable No. 1553 from Ankara dated August 24, 1944, comprising document 495, and letter from the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul to Board Representative Hirschmann dated August 18, 1944. See also Rescue to and through Hungary.
- 2/ Letter from the Apostolic Delegate dated January 5, 1945, comprising document 496.
- 3/ Cable No. 1478 from Ankara dated August 12, 1944, comprising document 497.

V E. COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS: OTHERS

Soon after the establishment of the Board efforts were made through United States Missions in the various countries to ascertain existing attitudes and possibilities with respect to refugee rescue and relief. Significant responses received by the Board are summarized below. 1/

Afghanistan. According to a report from the United States Legation in Afghanistan received in March 1944, there was little chance for any substantial number of refugees to be absorbed into the Afghan economy, nor was it likely that they would be welcome in a fanatically Moslem country. Because of the primitive economy and low standard of living in Afghanistan, there was said to be practically no opportunity for Europeans in the fields of domestic commerce, agriculture, or the service trades. It was indicated, however, that since the Afghan Government in the past welcomed the coming of qualified technicians and professional men, it was possible that a small number - perhaps fifty - such refugees and their dependents might be accepted in Afghanistan. It was suggested that if the names and qualifications of refugees proposed for settlement in that country were to be submitted, the Afghan Government would be approached by the Legation and the matter discussed with them. 2/

Inasmuch as the need for utilizing this possibility never materialized, the substance of this report was turned over to representatives of private American relief agencies for such use as

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1/ For accounts of more positive action taken by other governments in connection with the Board's rescue and relief efforts, see especially Rescue to and through Switzerland (offers made by various governments with respect to temporary refuge for child refugees from enemy oppression) and Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports (affirmative action taken by various Latin American countries toward extending protection via diplomatic channels to endangered persons in enemy territory).

2/ Dispatch No. 405 from Kabul dated March 5, 1944.



might be made of it in connection with post-war resettlement.

Argentina. In April 1944 the United States Embassy at Buenos Aires reported that the consensus of persons active in Jewish rescue and relief work was that so long as the regime then in power remained, no assistance whatsoever could be expected from the Argentine Government in refugee matters. Certain Jewish organizations in Argentina were said to own large tracts of land which might easily support several thousand refugee families if there should come a radical change in the Argentine Government under which such immigrants could be admitted. Argentina itself was said to be capable of absorbing millions of immigrants, but "no conceivable political change would make possible the willing acceptance of a very large proportion of Jews among those proposed millions." 1/

Australia. In February 1944 Minister Johnson reported that except for an offer to admit 150 Jewish children from Switzerland, there was little active interest on the part of the Australian Government in the problem of rescuing or assisting refugees. This 150 was in addition to a like number for whom permission had been granted over a year before but who had not been able to get to Australia. The children were to be the full responsibility of the Australian Jewish Welfare Association which, with its associates in Great Britain, had made the arrangements for their admission. 2/

Minister Johnson also reported that some time before the Australian Government had agreed to admit a small group of Poles from Russia on the understanding, apparently unwritten, that Poland would repatriate these persons after the war, paying all expenses. The arrangements for these persons were said to have been made by the Polish Consul General in Sydney. The Poles were supposed to have reached Iran, but nothing further was then known of the matter. 3/ This group subsequently reached Australia late in 1944.

Belgian Government-in-Exile. In March 1944 Ambassador Winant reported from London that officials dealing with refugee problems for the Belgian Government-in-Exile had been informed of the Board's policy as outlined and had signified their desire to cooperate to the fullest possible extent. 4/

Charge d'Affaires Schoenfeld subsequently reported the substance of discussions with an official of the Belgian Ministry of

1/ Dispatch No. 14547 from Buenos Aires dated April 21, 1944.

2/ See also Rescue to and through Switzerland.

3/ Airgram No. A-6 from Canberra received February 26, 1944.

4/ Cable No. 30 from London dated March 1, 1944.

Labor and Social Welfare, who stated that although it was in general very difficult for refugees to escape from Belgium, nevertheless every few weeks a small number of people did manage to get through. Certain recommendations advanced by this official for facilitating escapes through Spain were promptly communicated to Ambassador Hayes in Madrid. 1/

Bolivia. In a communication from the United States Embassy in Bolivia received in February 1944, the Board was advised that the Bolivian Government had indicated that, as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, "its conduct with respect to Semites will be in accordance with that adopted by the other nations of the continent. Within the country, nationals and foreigners shall enjoy the same guarantees under the Political Constitution of the State without distinction as to whether they are Jews or not."

The President of the Bolivian Revolutionary Junta was reported to have remarked that he had no racial prejudices; it was indicated that the only concern of the Bolivian Junta was that Bolivia obtain in future immigration persons technically qualified to fulfill the needs of the Bolivian economy. 2/

Brazil. Early in 1944 the Board was advised by the United States Embassy at Rio de Janeiro that the refugee question had been taken under active consideration by the Brazil Minister of Justice and by the National Immigration Council. It was pointed out that, while there were many conflicting currents of public opinion with respect to permitting the entry of European refugees into Brazil, that country's policy in the past had been, in general, a liberal one. The National Immigration Council only a short time before had passed a resolution urging that the Brazilian Government consent to receive a group of 500 Jewish refugee children from France. 3/

A report received by the Board from private sources, subsequently relayed to the United States Embassy in Rio, held that Juan Alberto, Brazilian Minister of Economic Coordination, in a private interview had stated his belief that Brazil could reasonably undertake a progressive five-year program for the settlement of Jewish and other European refugees beginning with 100,000 during the first year.

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1/ See Rescue to and through Spain.

2/ Dispatch No. 3122 from La Paz dated February 10, 1944.

3/ Dispatches No. 14561 and 14890 from Rio dated February 12 and March 11, 1944.

Despite urgent representations subsequently made to the Brazilian Foreign Office, President Vargas, to whom refugee matters were referred, showed no inclination to commit Brazil to the reception of refugees of any kind. 1/

Canada. A report received by the Board from Toronto in March 1944 indicated that, while no specific cases of racial discrimination in the matter of immigration had been brought to the attention of the Consulate, according to a representative of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society in Toronto, Canada's restrictive immigration policy was more rigidly enforced in the case of persons of Jewish extraction than in the case of any other race admitted to that country. 2/

A reply received from the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, in response to a note sent by the United States Legation in Ottawa outlining the position of this Government on the subject of aid to war refugees, called attention to the declaration of policy made some months before by the Canadian Prime Minister and reviewed steps taken by the Canadian Government in that direction. It also requested that consideration be given by the United States to permitting the entry into this country of 900 European refugees then at liberty in Canada who were anxious to proceed to the United States because of the presence here of relatives or close friends. 3/ No action was taken by the Board in this matter, however, inasmuch as any such steps would have been outside the Board's jurisdiction.

Chile. In March 1944 the United States Embassy at Santiago reported that during one period in the past, Chilean consular officials were said to have waived legal requirements frequently in the case of immigrant refugees, allegedly for considerations in some instances. As a result, the immigration laws of that country had subsequently been more rigidly enforced, although the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs denied any discrimination against Jews. A considerable number of victims of Nazi oppression, Jewish and otherwise, were said already to have migrated to Chile. Some latent racial feelings were reported to exist in Chile, however, owing to the fact that a large portion of the population was German or of German descent and Nazi propaganda agents had been active among this element over a period of years. 4/

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- 1/ Dispatches No. 16169 and 16511 from Rio dated June 1 and June 20, 1944, and Airgram No. A-1195 from Rio dated June 27, 1944.  
2/ Dispatch No. 1490 from Toronto dated March 17, 1944.  
3/ Dispatch No. 835 from Ottawa dated March 18, 1944.  
4/ Dispatch No. 9105 from Santiago dated March 11, 1944.

China. According to reports transmitted to the Board during early 1944 from diplomatic and consular officers in Kunming, Sian, and Chengtu, the official attitude of the Chinese toward the entry of war refugees was generally negative. In view of the tremendous relief problems already faced by the Chinese Government with respect to its own homeless and destitute peoples, it was considered doubtful that the Chinese reaction would be favorable to any concrete proposal involving the acceptance and care of substantial numbers of refugees. Moreover, transportation facilities into unoccupied China were said to be so limited that any refugee traffic would probably interfere seriously with the importation of essential materials. However, so far as was known, there was no specific bar to the entry of Jews or other war refugees from Japanese-occupied areas into unoccupied China, nor had any cases been reported of the turning back of such refugees at the borders.

It was stated that no Jewish problem existed in any form in China. The condition of refugees generally in both occupied and unoccupied China was reported to be serious, but not more so than that of the Chinese themselves. There was said to be no evidence that the Japanese deliberately mistreated refugees in occupied areas, a statement seemingly borne out by the report that few, if any, refugees in Japanese-occupied Chinese cities appeared to have made any effort to emigrate to unoccupied China. 1/

The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, in response to an approach made by the United States Embassy in Chungking, subsequently pledged the complete support of the Chinese Government in the Board's efforts to rescue and care for the victims of enemy oppression. Full protection was promised Jews and any other European minorities who had been "rendered homeless and wandered to China."

Particularly gratifying to the Chinese Government was the mention of rescue and relief for "other victims of enemy persecution," including the victims of Japanese oppression, 2/ despite the fact that no opportunities arose whereby specific efforts could be directed by the Board to aid individuals in this category.

Colombia. The United States Embassy at Bogota in February 1944 reported that the Colombian Government had indicated a general willingness to cooperate in extending humanitarian assistance to European war refugees. According to a Foreign Office spokesman, no legal obstacles to immigration existed in Colombia at the time other than ordinary wartime controls, but transportation difficulties had prevented any great number of refugees from reaching that country.

1/ Dispatch No. 2345 from Chungking dated March 22, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 2436 from Chungking dated April 15, 1944.



Colombia's post-war policy was then under study, and plans were reportedly being drawn up to restrict immigration to persons fitting into the local economy. It was thus felt that any cooperation on refugee matters would be subject to the limitations imposed by this policy when definitely adopted. 1/

Cuba. According to a report received in March 1944 from the United States Embassy in Havana, immigration into Cuba had practically ceased since the early part of 1942 as a result of a decree of April 18, 1942, forbidding the granting of visas to nationals or natives of Axis or Axis-occupied countries, for security reasons. The attitude of the Cuban authorities toward the refugee problem was described as "indifferent, if not slightly hostile, with little more than lip service being accorded to its humanitarian aspects." 2/

Dominican Republic. The Dominican Foreign Office in March 1944 indicated that it would cooperate fully with the war refugee policy of this Government. The United States' policy, the Dominican note asserted, coincided with that followed by the Dominican Government since 1937 when, on the occasion of the Evian Conference on refugees, the Dominican delegation was instructed to indicate that the Dominican Republic was prepared to receive up to 100,000 European immigrants. This policy was put into practice a short time afterward, according to the Foreign Office, with the signing of a contract with the Association for the Establishment of Colonists in the Republic, by virtue of which refuge had been accorded a great number of refugees. 3/

Ecuador. In an early communication from the United States Embassy in Ecuador the Board was advised that there were no special restrictions in Ecuador against the entry of Jews into that country on national or religious grounds, although like all other immigrants they were required by law and regulations to enter for certain specified purposes, more particularly, to engage in agricultural activities or activities related to essential industries, to be technicians, or to engage in professions. Insofar as physically fit refugees were concerned, the Embassy reported that there would seem to be opportunities in Ecuador, as in other relatively undeveloped countries of the Americas having land suitable for agricultural exploitation. 4/

Egypt. A report was received in February 1944 from Minister Kirk in Egypt describing the refugee problem in that country. The Egyptian Government was reported to have adopted a benevolent attitude toward the refugee problem in the Middle East, as evidenced

1/ Dispatch No. 3321 from Bogota dated February 4, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 6149 from Havana dated March 1, 1944

3/ Dispatch No. 1635 from Ciudad Trujillo dated March 27, 1944.

4/ Dispatch No. 1041 from Quito dated February 7, 1944.

by its permitting the entry of various groups of Poles, Greeks, and Yugoslavs sponsored by the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration. Nevertheless, the Government was reported to have made it clear that the sojourn of these refugees in Egypt was to be "in transit," although it had not reached the question of defining the period meant by this term. 1/

El Salvador. According to a report received from Ambassador Thurston in February 1944, the Salvadoran Government expressed sympathy for the cause of war refugees but was said to have stated that popular antipathy and a dense population had caused it to impose certain restrictions sharply limiting the number of immigrants admitted to that country. 2/

The Salvadoran Government later, however, "for reasons of humanity and convenience," agreed to permit the entry of certain aged Jews closely related to persons having resided in San Salvador for ten years or more and able to support them. This arrangement was also said to have been extended to children under 16 under the guardianship or charge of immigrant Jews. Certain refugee experts and technicians were likewise reportedly permitted entry. 3/

Ethiopia. According to an airgram from the United States Legation in Addis Ababa, representations and repeated inquiries failed to evoke any statement from the Ethiopian Government concerning the extent to which it was prepared to cooperate in the rescue and relief of Jews and other persecuted minorities. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, however, was said to have informed a member of the Legation's staff that, since the country was still engaged in reconstruction efforts, the assistance it could afford refugees was necessarily limited. 4/

Finland. According to reports received from Helsinki in April 1944 no actual official discrimination against refugees existed in Finland. Although the entry of refugees was not encouraged by the Finnish Government, they were not turned back at the frontier. 5/

France. In February 1944 Counselor Chapin of the United States Consulate in Algiers advised the Board that a spokesman for the French Committee of National Liberation had indicated that the Committee would gladly associate itself with the relief and rescue work with which the Board was concerned. Counselor Chapin reported

- 1/ Airgram No. A-84 from Cairo dated February 18, 1944.
- 2/ Dispatch No. 1230 from San Salvador dated February 2, 1944.
- 3/ Dispatch No. 1261 from San Salvador dated February 8, 1944.
- 4/ Airgram No. A-20 from Addis Ababa dated May 24, 1944.
- 5/ Cables No. 303 and 341 from Helsinki dated April 3, and 20, 1944.

that, at the same time, the spokesman pointed out that one of the chief preoccupations of the Committee was, of necessity, the problem of refugees from France then in North Africa and the general displacement of French nationals. 1/

French cooperation was later obtained in connection with the admission to Camp Lyautey in North Africa of refugees evacuated from Spain. 2/

Guatemala. In April 1944 Ambassador Long advised the Board that little was being done officially in Guatemala toward the rescue and relief of persecuted elements in Europe, although since 1933 permission had been granted for the entrance of some 800 to 1,000 refugees. The Guatemalan Government reportedly permitted the entry of refugees for permanent residence where such refugees were able to obtain a guarantee of support from relatives already residents or nationals of the country. In a few instances refugees had been able to gain entry for permanent residence without such local sponsors. However, in all cases entry was granted only under the provisions of the Guatemalan Immigration Law, which forbade immigrants to open new commercial establishments, to act as agents, or to engage in any remunerative occupation except agriculture without express permission from the Guatemalan Government. 3/

Haiti. Soon after the creation of the Board Ambassador White reported that a Committee of Aid for Refugees had been appointed by the Haitian Government, an initial contribution of \$500 having been made by President Lescot. At its first meeting in February 1944 the Committee not only endorsed the objectives of this Government with respect to refugees but also voted to obtain funds by a special state lottery for \$10,000 and by a special issue of five-centime postage stamps. Monies obtained in these ways were to be devoted to the relief of United Nations' refugees through the National War Fund which had already been set up in this country to control solicitations for war-created relief needs.

According to Ambassador White, there were no restrictions upon the entry of Jews as such into Haiti. With respect to settling refugees in Haiti, Ambassador White felt that in view of the low cost and abundance of labor and the existence of considerable unemployment in the towns, the evacuation to Haiti of refugees without some capital of their own "would be most unfortunate." 4/

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1/ Dispatch No. 122 from Algiers dated February 22, 1944.

2/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.

3/ Dispatch No. 1002 from Guatemala dated April 5, 1944.

4/ Dispatches No. 2521, 2559, and 2710 from Port-au-Prince dated January 31, February 10, and April 3, 1944, respectively.

Honduras. In February 1944, the United States Embassy in Honduras reported to the Board that the immigration of Jews into Honduras was not encouraged because of previous experience with what were described as other "incompatible" groups. 1/

Iceland. In a report from Minister Morris the Board was advised that the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an informal discussion of the refugee problem, had pointed out that Iceland was a country "of poor economic resources with a small homogeneous population who had lived in a state of semi-exclusion from other Europeans for centuries. It, therefore, could not be expected that the Icelanders could quickly adjust themselves to a basically different viewpoint in respect to foreigners. On the other hand, he felt that there was no anti-Semitic feeling here and that Icelanders in common with other decent free people sympathized with and deplored the fate of Jewish and other victims of Nazi and Fascist mistreatment." 2/

India. In March 1944 the Board was advised of the receipt of a reply from the Indian Government in response to a note addressed to it by the United States Mission in New Delhi requesting cooperation in war refugee matters. India's refugee problem, according to this reply, was "probably greater than that of any other allied or neutral country." An official statement accompanying the reply indicated that in addition to some 500,000 evacuees from British colonies in southeast Asia and from China, an estimated 3,500 Poles and a scattering of Europeans of various other nationalities had been given refuge in India following the outbreak of hostilities. The Indian reply pointed to the possibility of a "further liability for 8,000 additional Poles." It also suggested that the advance of the Allied armies into Burma might well result in a renewed flow of refugees from Burma into India. "In the light of the present food and accommodation problems and the general economic situation," the Indian Government concluded that it was not in a position to accept more war refugees. 3/

Iraq. Minister Henderson reported that "so far as the Legation has been able to ascertain no Jewish or other refugees from Nazi persecution desire or have desired to find a refuge or to establish a domicile in this country. The only refugee problem which has faced Iraq, therefore, has been that of refugees in transit. The Iraqi Government has in general pursued a policy of permitting these refugees to pass through the country unless they happened to be Jews traveling to Palestine to settle there .....

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1/ Airgram No. A-38 from Tegucigalpa dated February 1, 1944.

2/ Airgram No. A-19 from Reykjavik dated February 19, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 404 from New Delhi dated March 30, 1944.



"The considerations which prompt the Iraqi Government to refuse visas to Jewish refugees bound for Palestine appear to be based on national policies of so vital a nature that in my opinion no approaches of the character suggested . . . would alter them. The main objective of Iraqi foreign policy is to promote closer Arab cooperation with a view to the formation in the not distant future of some kind of a union of Arab states in this area. The Iraqi Government is convinced that if the Zionists are able to achieve their goal of setting up a National Jewish State in Palestine this objective cannot be accomplished and that the success of the Zionist program would mean the non-realization of Arab hopes for the future . . . It is believed that unless backed by foreign armed forces it would be almost impossible for any Government to survive in Iraq just now which would take steps to facilitate the travel of Jewish settlers to Palestine, and it would be difficult to convince local Arabs that Jewish refugees bound for Palestine will not eventually settle there." 1/

Mexico. In February 1944 Ambassador Messersmith, in outlining the Mexican attitude with respect to the rescue and relief of refugees, reported to the Board the substance of certain discussions with a spokesman for the Mexican Ministry for Foreign Affairs. So far as the question of Mexican hospitality to Jews was concerned, Ambassador Messersmith reported that there was no particular problem, Mexico having afforded refuge to large numbers of refugees without question as to their religion. Ambassador Messersmith felt, however, that while Mexico was entirely in sympathy with the proposed rescue and relief activities, it probably would be unable to take any active part in the transportation of refugees to this continent or to assume any responsibility for the maintenance of such refugees in Mexico. In this connection it was pointed out that Mexico was already affording hospitality to large groups of Spanish refugees, as well as to large numbers of other refugees from Europe, many of them Jews, in addition to cooperating in the settlement in Mexico of approximately 1,500 Polish refugees. Ambassador Messersmith therefore felt that it would be unwise to solicit Mexican cooperation in other than general terms. 2/

In August 1944 Ambassador Messersmith relayed to the Board the substance of a statement appearing in the Mexican press to the effect that the Mexican Government had indicated its willingness to establish a "port of refuge." This statement issued by the Minister of Interior, indicated that Mexico was prepared to set up a safety port for Jewish refugees from Europe, particularly women and children; it was not, however, prepared to accept financial responsibility for their transportation and maintenance. The statement also

1/ Airgram No. A-8 from Baghdad dated February 18, 1944.

2/ Dispatches No. 15781, 16011, and 17235 from Mexico City dated February 8, February 18, and April 27, 1944.

stipulated that the repatriation of any refugees so accepted would be expected upon the termination of the war. 1/

Inasmuch as the Mexican Government's offer had resulted from the visit of two representatives of private American relief organizations on a mission to Mexico and other American republics undertaken with the approval of the Board, Ambassador Messersmith was asked, in his discretion, to convey to Mexican authorities the Board's appreciation of their humanitarian action. Ambassador Messersmith was also requested to assure Mexico that, should refugees be so admitted, the Board would make the necessary financial arrangements for their maintenance and care while in Mexico. 2/

Netherlands Government-in-Exile. In March 1944 Ambassador Winant reported from London that officials dealing with refugee problems for the Netherlands Government-in-Exile had been informed of the Board's policy as outlined and had signified their desire to cooperate to the fullest possible extent. 3/

A subsequent report from Charge d'Affaires Schoenfeld in London indicated the substance of a conversation with an official in the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who reiterated that Dutch authorities were in agreement with the policy expressed in the President's Executive Order and would be glad to support any action that might be originated by the Board. It was stated that, of the 180,000 Jews originally living in Holland, about 140,000 had been deported to Poland; only about 8,000 Jews, recognized as such, remained in Holland. The other 32,000 had just dropped from sight. It was thought that some might have found refuge in France or made their way to Switzerland, but most of them were probably still living in Holland in concealment with the help of the non-Jewish population.

In response to the question as to whether any instances were known where refugees had been turned back at the borders of neutral countries, this spokesman indicated that some such instances were known to the Dutch authorities - Switzerland, for example - but for the most part he felt that neutral countries, while they had not actively encouraged escape across their borders, had not put any special obstacles in the way. 4/

The Netherlands Government-in-Exile later cooperated in making currency available to enable rescue and relief operations, notably

- 1/ Dispatches No. 19191, 19249, and 19376 from Mexico City dated August 3, 5, and 9, 1944, respectively.
- 2/ Cables No. 1493 to Mexico City dated August 10, 1944.
- 3/ Cable No. 30 from London dated March 1, 1944.
- 4/ Dispatch No. 127 from London dated March 6, 1944.

on behalf of Dutch nationals in enemy territory, under the terms of a Treasury license granted to the Queen Wilhelmina Fund. 1/

New Zealand. In March 1944 the United States Legation in Wellington reported the receipt of a note from the Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs stating that the policy of the New Zealand Government with respect to refugees "has been and continues to be one of affording these people the maximum possible assistance consistent with the resources and the security of the Dominion." 2/

In the granting of immigration permits during recent years, the Prime Minister stated, New Zealand had looked sympathetically on the applications of persons suffering persecution or displaced from their countries or residences. It was estimated that between 1933 and 1941 the total number of immigration permits issued was in excess of 3,700, including permits for nearly 500 Chinese refugee women and children. This total did not include evacuees from Pacific territories afforded hospitality in New Zealand, who were estimated to number between 500 and 600, nor did it include some 65 Poles from Japan to whom New Zealand agreed to give temporary refuge. The granting of permits since 1941 had, of course, been affected by the spread of the war in the Pacific, but it was indicated that only a short time before New Zealand had agreed to receive and provide accommodations for up to 700 Polish refugee children from the Middle East. 2/

Nicaragua. In February 1944 the Nicaraguan Government, according to a report to the Board from Chargé d' Affaires Finley of the United States Embassy in Nicaragua, indicated that it would permit the entry of war refugees "under the same conditions as the United States and in a number proportionate to the population of both countries." 3/

In a later communication the Board was advised that while no doubts were entertained there as to the sincerity of the Nicaraguan Government's offer with respect to refugees, under the conditions named technical difficulties could well prevent the arrival of any considerable number of such persons in Nicaragua. 4/

Norwegian Government-in-Exile. In March 1944 Ambassador Winant reported from London that officials dealing with refugee problems for the Norwegian Government-in-Exile had been informed of the Board's policy as outlined and had signified their desire to cooperate to the fullest possible extent. 5/

1/ See Projects of Private Organizations: the Queen Wilhelmina Fund.

2/ Airmgram No. A-30 from Wellington dated March 9, 1944, and Dispatch No. 251 from Wellington dated April 5, 1944.

3/ Airmgram No. A-85 from Managua dated February 25, 1944.

4/ Dispatch No. 2043 from Managua dated March 6, 1944.

5/ Cable No. 30 from London dated March 1, 1944.

A subsequent report from Charge d'Affaires Schoenfeld described conversations with an official in charge of refugee matters for the Norwegian Government-in-Exile, who reiterated that this Government's refugee policy had the full sympathy of the Norwegian authorities and that they would cooperate in every way possible. He stated that there was no special difficulty in the way of Norwegians escaping to Sweden once they reached the frontier. The chief obstacle in achieving their escape lay in their inability to move about within Norway itself. According to this spokesman, approximately 24,000 Norwegians had by that time escaped to Sweden; another 2,000 had fled to the United Kingdom and to other areas. Practically all of the Jewish population of Norway, amounting to about 870 persons, had been deported to Poland by the Nazis, it was stated, and the Norwegian Government had no knowledge of their fate. Between 6,000 and 8,000 Norwegians were said to be in Germany; 2,000 of these were being held as prisoners of war, while the remainder were held in concentration camps or were in prison as the result of courts-martial. 1/

Panama. According to a report received from the United States Embassy in Panama in February 1944, the Panamanian Government had allegedly experienced considerable difficulty with Jewish refugees previously admitted because of competition with established businesses, and both the people and the Government were reported to be unsympathetic to a request to receive any more. A strict Panamanian decree was cited as barring refugees from all enemy or enemy-occupied territory. Charge d'Affaires Muccio suggested the likelihood that only persons capable of and agreeable to the opening of new agricultural territory would be acceptable; he felt that it would be impolitic to exert pressure for any other concessions at that time. 2/

A memorandum from the Panamanian Foreign Office subsequently transmitted by the Embassy, however, in connection with the proposal that Panama cooperate with this Government in war refugee matters indicated that it would lend its "decided cooperation" to the realization of the principles represented in the Board's work. 3/

Paraguay. In February 1944 the United States Embassy in Paraguay was informed by the Paraguayan Government that it was anxious to accept such refugees as would be qualified to open up new agricultural lands, according to a report to the Board from Ambassador Frost. 4/ A later message stated that the colonization and immigra-

1/ Dispatch No. 76 from London dated March 3, 1944. See also Rescue to and through Sweden.

2/ Dispatch No. 5133 from Panama dated February 4, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 5166 from Panama dated February 12, 1944.

4/ Airgram No. A-45 from Asuncion dated February 12, 1944.



tion plans of Paraguay were in the hands of the Minister of Agriculture. Definite recommendations were expected, which would serve as a basis for Paraguay's position on the refugee problem. 1/

The substance of these recommendations was made available to Ambassador Frost in May 1944, in a letter from the Paraguayan Foreign Office. In this letter it was indicated that Paraguay might possibly receive more than 100,000 families as immigrants. The proposed immigrant groups would be offered the opportunity of establishing themselves in partially developed agricultural colonies. Preliminary to this program, it was stated, would be the systematic classification of would-be immigrants before embarkation, for the purpose of giving preference to young families of farmers or artisans skilled in small industries. The families of merchants or workmen without special talent would not be accepted. 2/

Peru. In February 1944 a report was received from Charge d'Affaires Butler of the United States Embassy in Peru with respect to the Peruvian attitude toward the rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution. Pending the receipt of a formal reply on refugee policy from the Peruvian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (which the Embassy expected to be non-committal or negative as well as delayed), the Board was advised that little assistance or real sympathy could be expected from Peru. According to report, the governing class in Peru feared Communism, disliked Jews, and did not want to admit into the country any elements that might aggravate national, religious, or social problems. For all practical purposes, the Board was advised, Jewish refugees were not permitted entry into Peru. So far as was known, there was no restrictive policy operating against other non-Axis nationals, but in actual practice all applications for visas were closely scrutinized for security reasons. Moreover, Peru reportedly gave no encouragement to the entry of political refugees, particularly Jews, its cooperation in this problem being limited to a routine participation in the activities of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. 3/

The Embassy was later informally advised by a Foreign Office official that the admissibility into Peru of war refugees had not changed since 1938, when the Peruvian Government informed the Intergovernmental Committee of the inability of Peru to absorb any refugees other than agriculturists. 4/

Polish Government-in-Exile. In March 1944 Ambassador Winant reported from London that officials dealing with refugee problems

1/ Airgram No. A-85 from Asuncion dated March 11, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 2093 from Asuncion dated May 13, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 9017 dated February 11, 1944.

4/ Dispatch No. 9203 from Lima dated March 10, 1944.

for the Polish Government-in-Exile were informed of the Board's policy as outlined and signified their desire to cooperate to the fullest possible extent. 1/

The Board was later advised by Charge d'Affaires Schoenfeld of the substance of conversations he had with an official of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was said to be in full accord with the policy set forth in the Board's Executive Order and who reiterated that the Board would receive the fullest possible cooperation from his Government. It was stated that because of the great number of Poles held in concentration camps by the Germans, the small percentage who did manage to escape constituted a considerable number of people. After citing certain obstacles interfering with the rescue and relief of Nazi victims, this spokesman stated that the most helpful measures the Board could take for the rescue and relief of refugees would be to intercede with the governments of those countries in which the United States had representation, to assist with the passport and visa problem, and to permit funds to be transferred from this country to Europe for relief and rescue work. 2/

There was subsequently forwarded from London a copy of a declaration issued by the Polish Government and approved by the Council of Ministers, in which full support was pledged to every endeavor made by the United States in connection with the rescue and relief of refugees. 3/

Saudi-Arabia. In February 1944 Minister Moose reported that there were no Jews in Saudi-Arabia. 4/ According to this report, "The nature of the country, the nature of its inhabitants, the tenets of the prevailing religion (Islam) and the local adverse reaction to Zionism, combine to make it certain that no Jews will be permitted to enter Saudi-Arabia unless a special reason exists for doing so. Those same reasons make it unlikely that Jews will apply for admission into Saudi Arabia."

South Africa. The Board was advised early in March 1944 by the United States Legation in Capetown that no official reply had been received from the South African Government with respect to possible cooperation in war refugee matters. The question of post-war immigration into the Union had meanwhile been raised in the South African House of Assembly, however, in a motion introduced by a majority party member calling for large-scale European immigration, to which an amendment was added specifically barring Jews. Such a restriction was said to be favored by the majority of both leading

1/ Cable No. 30 from London dated March 1, 1944.

2/ Dispatch No. 539 from London dated March 2, 1944.

3/ Dispatch No. 599 from London dated May 23, 1944.

4/ Airgram No. A-10 from Jidda dated February 16, 1944.

political parties. Another amendment provided for the immigration of orphans under 10 years of age "from countries from which the people of the Union have sprung." Debate on the proposed legislation was reported to be in progress. 1/ No further information of this matter was ever received by the Board and in the absence of any great number of refugees for whom havens needed to be sought, the matter was not pursued.

Uruguay. The Uruguayan Government, while indicating its willingness to cooperate in war refugee matters, stated in a note to the United States Embassy at Montevideo in February 1944 that it would prefer to have this country take the initiative and acquaint Uruguay with the nature of the program in connection with which her cooperation was sought. 2/ Specific requests for cooperative action were subsequently addressed to Uruguay in connection with the Board's efforts to extend protection to endangered persons in enemy territory holding documents issued in the name of Uruguay and other Latin American republics. 3/

The Uruguayan Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs meanwhile informed the United States Embassy at Montevideo that an officer of the Foreign Office had been directed to prepare a declaration of policy to be issued by the Uruguayan Government similar to the declaration issued by President Roosevelt upon the creation of the War Refugee Board. 4/

Venezuela. The United States Embassy at Caracas in February 1944 reported to the Board that since 1937 the number of Jews entering Venezuela had been small and generally limited to persons having relatives or influential contacts there. Even transit visas for Jews were reported to have been discontinued. Application for visas of any kind were said to be required to state race, religion, and nationality; if the applicant was Jewish or of Jewish origin the applications were denied. 5/

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1/ Dispatch No. 483 from Capetown dated March 11, 1944.

2/ Airgram No. A-96 dated February 22, 1944.

3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Recognition of Latin American Passports.

4/ Airgram No. A-183 from Montevideo dated March 28, 1944.

5/ Dispatch No. 5464 from Caracas dated February 4, 1944.

VI A. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES

Throughout the War Refugee Board's existence close working relations were maintained with the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, with headquarters in London. 1/ Despite the apparent similarity in the functions of the two organizations, the Board was essentially an emergency short-term agency set up to accomplish speedily and, if need be. by informal and even unconventional methods the outright removal from enemy territory of victims of Nazi persecution, as well as to help enable the survival of persons who could not be so rescued. The Intergovernmental Committee, on the other hand, and especially prior to the summer of 1944, was a long-term planning rather than an operational agency, whose international nature 2/ and lack of working relationships with private welfare and relief agencies rendered impossible the prompt accomplishment of rescue and relief operations of this type.

Previous Intergovernmental Efforts. The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees was established as an outgrowth of the Evian Conference held in France in July 1938. This meeting, held at the initiative of President Roosevelt, was called to consider ways and means of introducing order into the "forced migration of political and religious refugees from Central Europe."

During the first year of its existence, the Intergovernmental Committee was thus chiefly concerned with efforts to negotiate with the Germans in order to work out some orderly plan of migration

- 1/ As of September 1945, 36 governments were members of the Intergovernmental Committee, these being the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eire, France, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the Union of South Africa, and Venezuela.
- 2/ As of the time the Board was created, there were 35 member governments with whom the Intergovernmental Committee necessarily maintained working arrangements.



for persons who, because of their race, religion, or political beliefs, were being oppressed by the Nazis. Before any major accomplishments were achieved, however, war broke out and the Committee's activities fell victim to conditions imposed by the war. Intergovernmental Committee efforts thereafter consisted largely of negotiations with various governments for places of resettlement.

The Bermuda Conference. During the early part of 1943 the British and United States Governments decided to call a meeting to examine all possible methods of relieving the distress of those in Europe who were victims of Nazi aggression. Following this Bermuda Conference, held in April 1943, the mandate of the Intergovernmental Committee as originally defined was extended "so as to include, as may be found necessary and practicable, in addition to those already within the mandate, those persons, wherever they may be, who as a result of events in Europe have had to leave, or may have to leave, their countries of residence because of the danger to their lives or liberties on account of their race, religion or political beliefs" and the Committee was empowered by the member states "to undertake negotiations with neutral or allied states or with organizations, and to take such steps as may be necessary to preserve, maintain and transport" persons coming within the mandate as extended. 1/

United States Government Financial Contributions to Intergovernmental Committee. In February 1944 the Department of State advised the Board of this Government's commitment to supply one-half of the operational expenses of the Intergovernmental Committee for the first quarter of 1944. In order "to avoid any possible misunderstanding and possible consequent weakening of the status of the Intergovernmental Committee," payment of £50,000 from the Board's allotment from the President's Emergency Fund was recommended. 2/

Such a payment (£50,000 plus £1,998 for administrative expenses for the last quarter of 1943) shortly thereafter was arranged by the Board, \$209,811.93 being transmitted to cover both payments. At the same time, however, the Board in a letter to the State Department indicated that this action was not to be construed as a commitment that the Board would continue to make funds available to the Intergovernmental Committee. With respect to the amount

1/ Resolution adopted at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee Executive Committee on August 4, 1938.

2/ Letter from the State Department dated February 7, 1944, comprising document 498.

made available, the Board stated that it was assuming that all projects financed from operational funds of the Committee and submitted to this Government for approval would be undertaken only after clearance with the Board. 1/

Subsequently, the Board requested and on May 15, 1944, obtained an additional allotment of \$2,000,000 from the President's Emergency Fund. \$1,800,000 of this amount was for payment to the Intergovernmental Committee as the balance of this government's commitment for 1944 and \$200,000 was for repayment to the Board for the \$50,000 advanced to the Committee in February 1944 from the Board's funds. 2/

In November 1944 arrangements were made at the request of the State Department 3/ for the transfer of another \$1,998 to the Intergovernmental Committee from the Board's own allotment from the President's Emergency Fund. This payment constituted this Government's share in the quarterly administrative expenses of the Committee. 4/ Subsequent requests from the Committee for contributions from the United States Government for the Committee's operational and administrative funds were handled by the State Department.

Understanding Reached on Respective Jurisdictions. In March 1944, in order to insure against the possibility of overlapping operations, the Board invited Sir Herbert Emerson and Patrick Malin, Director and Vice-Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, to come to Washington for general discussions with the Board members, Executive Director Pehle, and others concerning refugee problems. 5/ In the course of discussions held in Washington the following month, complete agreement was reached with regard to respective fields of operation. Copies of an exchange of memoranda between the Intergovernmental Committee and the Board were subse-

- 1/ Letter to the State Department dated February 26, 1944, comprising document 499.
- 2/ Memorandum to the President from the Board members comprising document 500, and letter dated May 15, 1944, from President Roosevelt to the Secretary of the Treasury, comprising document 501.
- 3/ Letter from the State Department dated November 11, 1944, comprising document 502.
- 4/ Letter to the State Department dated November 15, 1944, comprising document 503.
- 5/ Cable No. 2043 to London dated March 17, 1944.

quently sent abroad to representatives of both agencies, reinforcing a mutual desire for the closest cooperation between the staffs of the Intergovernmental Committee and the Board. 1/

"Credit Scheme" Approved. In the course of the Intergovernmental Committee discussions in Washington there was considered the substance of a proposal advanced by the British, asking that the Board jointly supplement certain refugee projects already in operation by setting up a "guarantee fund" in Switzerland in the hands of the Intergovernmental Committee. It was proposed that the British and the United States Government contribute equally to such a fund. 2/

The United States subsequently approved the proposed scheme, and the use of its \$2,000,000 1944 contribution for such purposes. It was further agreed that if the needs of the Committee should require additional sums, sympathetic consideration would be given toward making the necessary funds available. 3/

Shortly thereafter, in a message to the Director of the Intergovernmental Committee the Board indicated its earnest hope, particularly in view of the urgency of the situation in the Balkans, that it would be possible for the Intergovernmental Committee to initiate immediate operations under the credit scheme. In this connection the Board indicated that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee had the opportunity to spend at least an additional \$4,000,000 on productive rescue operations in the Balkans. The Board stressed the general conviction on the part of all responsible agencies in the Near East that substantial numbers of people might be saved. For these reasons the Intergovernmental Committee was urged to agree to underwrite certain credit operations already organized by the Joint Distribution Committee in several countries where the need was desperate, so as to enable that organization to proceed immediately, as an agent of the Intergovernmental Committee, to take full advantage of the newly presented rescue opportunities. 4/ Intergovernmental Committee agreement to assume these obligations was subsequently obtained, 5/ and sub-

- 1/ Memorandum from the Director of the Intergovernmental Committee dated April 14, 1944, comprising document 504, and memorandum to the Director of the Intergovernmental Committee dated April 17, 1944, comprising document 505.
- 2/ British Embassy Aide Memoire to the State Department dated March 27, 1944, comprising document 488.
- 3/ State Department Aide Memoire to the British Embassy, undated, comprising document 489.
- 4/ Cable No. 5504 to London dated July 13, 1944, comprising document 506.
- 5/ Cable No. 5734 from London dated July 20, 1944, comprising document 507.

stantial funds were subsequently made available by the Intergovernmental Committee for refugee relief in Hungary, France, Rumania, and Northern Italy.

Assistance Extended in Selections for Oswego. At the request of the Board in connection with the removal to this country of 1,000 refugees who had fled to Italy, the Intergovernmental Committee representative in Italy assumed charge of the receipt of applications from refugees in the Rome area and initiated the selection in that area of families and individuals later brought to the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego, New York. 1/

Responsibility Assumed for Refugees on Iberian Peninsula. In the spring of 1945, upon the joint recommendation of this Government, the British, and various private relief agencies that had borne the expense of maintaining refugees from Axis oppression in Spain and Portugal, the Intergovernmental Committee agreed to assume responsibility for the maintenance and ultimate resettlement of all refugees of other than Spanish and Portuguese nationalities on the Iberian Peninsula. 2/

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1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.

2/ See Rescue to and through Portugal.



VI B. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Throughout its rescue and relief activities the Board made efforts to enlist the active cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in view of the humanitarian objectives to which that organization is dedicated and because its neutral status enabled it to operate in enemy territory. Furthermore, the International Red Cross was a channel of communications with enemy territory.

Cooperation of International Red Cross Delegates Obtained. Delegates of the International Red Cross in Turkey and Switzerland, for example, cooperated fully with Board representatives there in attempting to secure safe-conducts for ships scheduled for Balkan evacuation operations, in facilitating informal discussions with influential satellite officials, and in relaying information on the plight of refugees in enemy territory.<sup>1/</sup> The Delegate of the International Committee in Washington was also helpful in transmitting information received concerning significant conditions encountered by Red Cross representatives abroad in the course of their operations in enemy territory.

Assistance Rendered in Feeding Programs. Most successful of all the cooperative efforts on the part of the Red Cross, however, was the assistance rendered in the field of outright relief. One of the first actions of the Board upon its formation was to send an urgent message to the International Red Cross asking for a report with respect to what operational areas in occupied Europe were feasible in connection with providing food and medicines to Jews and other persecuted minorities denied the facilities made available to the rest of the population.<sup>2/</sup> The Board in effect took over from the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, to which the Red Cross had addressed an appeal some time before for funds to finance relief activities on behalf of suffering civilians

1/ See especially Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ Cable No. 279 to Bern dated January 27, 1944, comprising document 508.

in war-ravaged areas. In February 1944, upon the receipt of a preliminary reply from the Red Cross,<sup>1/</sup> arrangements were made by the Board for the prompt transmission to Switzerland of \$100,000 contributed by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, with which the Red Cross was able to purchase food and other supplies in neutral countries and in Hungary and Rumania for distribution, where reasonable controls could be exercised to persecuted groups in Rumania, Croatia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Two other Joint Distribution Committee relief projects recommended by the Board were accomplished with the aid of the International Red Cross. \$100,000 was made available by the Joint Distribution Committee for the purchase by representatives of that organization of foodstuffs in Turkey, from which parcels were made up and distributed by the Red Cross to internees in enemy territory, particularly in the Balkans and the Transnistrian area. Distribution of some \$36,000 worth of foodstuffs similarly obtained in Switzerland for the relief of persons interned in Czechoslovakia, was also effected through the Red Cross.<sup>2/</sup>

Red Cross assistance was also enlisted in connection with two feeding programs undertaken from Switzerland and Portugal in the summer of 1944 by the American Friends Service Committee. Some \$40,000 worth of food parcels were dispatched from these two neutral countries for the relief of displaced persons in France, while another \$10,000 was used for the purchase of French francs later utilized for relief purposes in France under Red Cross supervision.<sup>3/</sup>

In addition to the assistance rendered by the Red Cross in distributing relief supplies provided by the private agencies, the Red Cross handled the distribution of all Board food parcels in enemy territory, working closely with the Board's representatives in Bern and Stockholm.<sup>4/</sup>

Red Cross Intercession Urged on Behalf of Unassimilated Groups. Efforts were also made by the Board to obtain assurance from the German and satellite governments through the International Red Cross, that Jews and other persons detained, interned, or otherwise

1/ Cable No. 1028 from Bern dated February 18, 1944, comprising document 509.

2/ See Projects of Private Organizations: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for further details concerning all three of these projects.

3/ See Projects of Private Organizations: American Friends Service Committee.

4/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

confined because of race, religion, or political belief, would be accorded treatment equal to that of civilian internees. The Red Cross for many months declined to make the proposed representations, predicated this refusal to act on its own assumption that the Germans would undoubtedly reject any such appeal.1/ Shortly before the German military collapse, however, when it had become almost a foregone conclusion that German officials would be eager to curry Allied favor by acceding to such an appeal, the Red Cross asked the Germans to grant assimilated status to schutzhaeflinge (persons detained for security reasons), at least to the extent of permitting the receipt of food parcels. Thus, toward the end of 1944 and in early 1945, following German approval of such general relief action (in place of distribution to a limited number of camps previously permitted by individual commandants), substantial quantities of food made available by the Board and by private relief agencies were dispatched to German and German-occupied areas through Red Cross channels to help enable the survival of persons victimized by the Nazi regime.2/

Other Red Cross Aid in Hungary and Rumania. Upon the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 the Board asked the International Red Cross to send effective representation to Hungary in order to protect the well-being of groups there facing persecution at the hands of German and Hungarian Nazis. The Red Cross at first declined on the ground that such a delegation might be considered inconsistent with its traditional functions. After repeated urging, however, a special Red Cross delegation was sent into Hungary and widespread relief was eventually undertaken under Red Cross auspices, along with efforts on a diplomatic level designed to persuade Hungarian authorities to ameliorate their treatment of civilian internees and to accord less harsh treatment to minority groups in general.3/

Similar intervention with Rumanian authorities was attempted by delegates of the International Red Cross stationed in Bucharest following the occurrence of excesses there in the treatment of minority groups.4/

Efforts Made to Obtain International Red Cross Assistance in the Protection of Internees. In view of the success of Allied military developments and the well-known inclinations in certain official German circles to exterminate the maximum number of Jews before the end of the war, the Board early in September 1944

1/ See Relief Programs: Efforts to Obtain Assimilated Status for Interned Civilians.

2/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

3/ See Rescue from Hungary.

4/ See Rescue from Rumania.

instructed Representative McClelland in Bern to urge the International Red Cross to take preventive as well as corrective measures toward insuring protection to persons interned in such camps as Theresienstadt, with its 40,000 to 60,000 inmates. Toward that end, the Board proposed that the Red Cross endeavor to extend general supervision to Theresienstadt and to other German camps previously regarded by the Red Cross as more or less privileged in character. Mindful of the reply previously received from the Red Cross in response to the Board's request that a special delegation be dispatched in the Hungarian crisis to exercise whatever moral influence might be inherent in the presence of such delegates, the Board pointed out that even if the proposed line of action were beyond the traditional pattern of Red Cross activities and hence unprecedented, so was the situation.1/

Again in January 1945 the attention of International Red Cross authorities was once again drawn to the danger faced by Jewish survivors in German-controlled territory, particularly in view of renewed reports from a variety of sources that mass exterminations were planned by the Germans. In making representations to Red Cross authorities, Board Representative McClelland was asked to refer specifically to two other major concentrations of Jews known to exist in Axis territory in addition to Theresienstadt: Lodz with 60,000 to 80,000 inmates, and certain camps in Vienna with 18,000 inmates, as well as to any other localities or regions where Jews were believed to survive. The Board felt that frequent and extended visits on the part of Red Cross and other neutral representatives to places and regions where Jews were concentrated constituted one of the most effective means of preventing further exterminations, and pointed to the proved efficacy of this method in Budapest where, thanks to the presence of Red Cross and Swedish personnel, many lives were saved.2/

Referring to the German's consent some months before to permit the International Red Cross to inspect and care for Hungarian Jews engaged in forced labor in German and German-occupied territory, the Board asked that Representative McClelland urge immediate and continuing Red Cross action to safeguard the lives of these persons. Representative McClelland was further advised that this entire approach to the Red Cross was not to be construed as a plea for one-time acts of intercession but was a request for unremitting pursuit of the suggested activities as long as the danger remained.3/

- 1/ Cable No. 3074 to Bern dated September 6, 1944, comprising document 510, and Cable No. 3235 to Bern dated September 19, 1944.
- 2/ Efforts were also directed toward getting Switzerland and Sweden to send additional representatives to places where Jews were concentrated as a means of preventing further exterminations; see Approaches to Germany and the Satellites to Halt Persecution: Appeals through Neutral Countries.
- 3/ Cable No. 127 to Bern dated January 9, 1945, comprising document 398.



Although the Red Cross had repeatedly been denied permission to visit various German camps to which relief had been extended, including particularly the camp of Bergen-Belsen,<sup>1/</sup> Representative McClelland in the course of new representations on the matter late in January 1945 was assured by the President of the International Red Cross that efforts in this direction would not be relaxed. Toward that end the Red Cross indicated that it was still endeavoring to effect a general enlargement of its délégation in Germany. With respect to the supervision of labor deportees, the Red Cross indicated that it had been able to exercise fairly satisfactory supervision over Hungarian Jews sent to work in Austria but that such efforts with respect to workers in Germany proper had been less effective.<sup>2/</sup>

Red Cross representation in Germany was eventually substantially increased, the new delegates being stationed principally in or near camps to which the Board's feeding program had been extended, where their presence undoubtedly exercised a deterrent effect on the supervisory personnel of the various camps.<sup>3/</sup>

Expressions of Mutual Appreciation. Following the surrender of Germany, the President of the International Red Cross in a letter transmitted through its Washington Delegate in July 1945, thanked the Board for its part in having made possible the extensive relief work undertaken on behalf of unassimilated groups. The letter went on to recite the fact that the Board, "called into being under the wise and memorable leadership of President Roosevelt, enabled some tens of thousands of the most sorely tried war victims to receive some degree of help, although this was on a modest scale, in comparison to the stupendous needs of the sufferers. According to testimonies received repeatedly from the latter, this help, however, in many cases spelt rescue from death by starvation."<sup>4/</sup>

An expression of thanks to the International Red Cross for its various cooperative efforts was later transmitted by the Board, expressing particular gratitude for the role played by the Red Cross in affording relief to the suffering inmates of German concentration camps.<sup>5/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 415 from Bern dated January 20, 1945.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 581 from Bern dated January 27, 1945, comprising document 399.

<sup>3/</sup> See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

<sup>4/</sup> Letter from the International Red Cross in Geneva dated May 30, 1945, comprising document 511.

<sup>5/</sup> Letter to the International Red Cross dated August 11, 1945, comprising document 512.

VI C. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION.

Another organization with which close working relationships were maintained by the Board was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Whereas the Board was an agency set up by one government and dedicated to measures designed to secure the speedy rescue and relief of victims of enemy persecution, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was an organization of international character <sup>1/</sup> whose jurisdiction with respect to persons escaping from enemy territory in effect began where the Board's ended. The Board's rescue efforts were directed toward helping endangered persons reach safe territory. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was charged with the responsibility of assisting such rescued persons pending their repatriation or resettlement. For many months, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration took the position that it was not authorized to care for refugees escaping to neutral territory. In the last months of the war, however, when the Board was engaged in a special all-out effort to save innocent people from last-minute Nazi persecutions, Executive Director O'Dwyer succeeded in obtaining agreement from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to provide relief supplies to the International Red Cross in Switzerland for refugees escaping from Germany to Switzerland, on the theory that such refugees were in transit to United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration camps and hence wards of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> As of September 1945 there were 44 member governments of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. These were the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, the French Provisional Government, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippine Commonwealth, Poland, the Union of South Africa, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

<sup>2/</sup> See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcel Programs.

During the course of the Board's existence arrangements were made for the temporary care of thousands of refugees in United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration camps in Allied territory. As the result of general agreement on the part of the British and United States Governments, early in 1944 responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the newly established Camp Lyautey near Fedhala in North Africa was transferred to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Following arrangements made by this Government with the French Committee of National Liberation in North Africa later in 1944, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration took over the establishment and administration of a second camp for refugees at Philippeville in North Africa.<sup>1/</sup> Subsequently several refugee camps in Italy were turned over to or established by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Thousands who escaped across the Adriatic from Yugoslavia were maintained in these centers.

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration also cooperated with the Board by making available relevant information obtained by its representatives abroad, particularly data concerning existing refugee camps, transient and otherwise, in the Middle East, North Africa and Italy, and their estimated capacities.

The Board sought and obtained in May 1945 United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration help in connection with the repatriation of refugees at the Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration agreed to arrange for and finance the transportation of those refugees who could and were willing to return to their homelands in Europe.<sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> See Emergency Camps and Settlement: North Africa for further details concerning these two camps and the part played by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in their operation.

<sup>2/</sup> See Emergency Camps and Settlement: United States.

VI D. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
UNITED NATIONS WAR CRIMES COMMISSION

The threat of punishment for all those who participated in the Axis persecution of innocent minorities was the basis of the Board's psychological warfare program. Threats of this kind had been made by the United Nations 1/ even before the Board's establishment. In March 1943, the Congress of the United States passed a concurrent resolution which, after reciting the atrocities inflicted on the Jews by the Nazis, resolved as follows:

"That these brutal and indefensible outrages against millions of helpless men, women, and children should be, and they are hereby, condemned as unworthy of any nation or any regime which pretends to be civilized;

"RESOLVED FURTHER, That the dictates of humanity and honorable conduct in war demand that this inexcusable slaughter and mistreatment shall cease and that it is the sense of this Congress that those guilty, directly or indirectly, of these criminal acts shall be held accountable and punished in a manner commensurate with the offenses for which they are responsible."

Following the creation of the Board such threats were repeated in increasing tempo.2/ It was assumed by the Board that one of the primary functions of the United Nations Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes, set up in 1943, would be to gather evidence of such crimes and devise procedures for trying and punishing those enemy nationals who participated in the persecution of minorities.

1/ See, for example, the Moscow Conference Declaration of German Atrocities dated November 1, 1943, comprising document 424, and the United Nations Declaration dated December 17, 1942, comprising document 422.

2/ See Psychological Warfare Programs.



In the summer of 1944, however, the Board learned informally that the Commission had taken the view that inasmuch as there was no precedent under international law for including as war crimes acts committed by an enemy nation or its nationals against its own subjects or the subjects of another enemy nation, no plans were to be made for the trial and punishment of persons guilty of such acts.

Board Urged Sending Appropriate Instructions to Commission.  
In view of this absence of efforts on the part of the Commission to make provision for the just punishment of such war criminals, the Board at once addressed a memorandum to Under Secretary of State Stettinius under date of August 28, 1944, reviewing the Board's interest in the matter of war crimes and expressing the conviction that it would be a fearful miscarriage of justice if war criminals in this category should be permitted to escape punishment for their inhuman crimes. The Board also pointed out that failure to implement the numerous previous threats of punishment made by the United Nations and by this Government would not only discredit those having originated such statements but would undoubtedly render it far more difficult to deter similar criminal conduct in the future.

While the Board's investigation of the matter had revealed that Mr. Herbert Pell, the United States Representative on the Commission,<sup>1/</sup> was not satisfied with the position which the Commission had taken, it was also learned that the State Department had failed to instruct Mr. Pell on the matter. The Board therefore strongly urged that the State Department cable Mr. Pell, indicating clearly that the declared policy of the United States Government was to insure the just punishment of all Axis war criminals, including those guilty of crimes against the Jews and other minorities whether or not the victims of such crimes were of the same nationality as their oppressors, and instructing that he insist upon the formulation of a program by the Commission designed to effectuate this policy.<sup>2/</sup>

Despite repeated requests on the part of the Board in subsequent months asking that such instructions be dispatched by the

<sup>1/</sup> In January 1945 Mr. Pell ceased to function as a member of the Commission, being succeeded by his deputy, Lt. Col. J. V. Hodgson. In announcing this change, the State Department explained that Congress had failed to appropriate money to pay the salary and expenses of a full-time delegate. Although Mr. Pell subsequently offered to serve in his former capacity without compensation, no action was taken by the State Department on this offer.

<sup>2/</sup> Memorandum to Under Secretary of State Stettinius dated August 28, 1944, comprising document 513.

State Department and that a statement to that effect be made public, the State Department postponed making a decision in the matter on the ground that the whole war crimes situation was still "under active consideration" by the Department and other interested agencies.<sup>1/</sup>

Last-Minute Warnings Issued on Punishment for War Crimes. In view of the continued absence of any definitive statement by the State Department on the matter of war crimes and in view of the fact that, ironically enough, the dangers of last-minute extermination of civilian internees in Germany and German-occupied territory increased as the Germans were forced to yield more territory to advancing Allied armies, the Board toward the end of 1944 drafted a proposed statement for issuance by General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, cautioning all Germans against further ruthlessness in the treatment of men "in concentration camps and forced labor battalions" and warning that heavy punishment awaited those bearing any degree of responsibility for the mistreatment of internees. The statement was issued on November 7, 1944.

In April 1945, shortly before the German military collapse, a last declaration along these lines was made by the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, warning that any German guilty of maltreating detainees or prisoners of war would be "ruthlessly pursued and brought to punishment." <sup>2/</sup>

Final Decision of Commission Paralleled Board's Recommendations. Following the issuance of these last-minute warnings by the Allied Supreme Command and by the "Big Three" Governments, an affirmative position on the punishment of all persons guilty of crimes against Jews and other minorities was taken by the State Department and conveyed to the representative of this Government on the United Nations War Crimes Commission.

Board's Files Furnish War Crimes Data. Through its representatives abroad and tested contacts in Europe, the Board was kept fully advised concerning the German campaign of extermination and torture. Reports and accounts from these sources accumulated evidence in the files of the Board detailing atrocities and naming

<sup>1/</sup> Letter from the State Department dated December 14, 1944, comprising document 514.

<sup>2/</sup> See Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board for a further discussion of these and other warnings directed to the German and satellite nations.

their perpetrators. (Two such reports, eye-witness accounts of events which occurred at the notorious extermination centers established by the Germans at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southwestern Poland, were released to the public in November 1944.<sup>1/</sup>)

When the war in Europe ended and the cases against Nazi war criminals were under preparation the War Department liaison groups investigating and developing such cases for the United Nations War Crimes Commission sought permission to study these Board files. The Board immediately made available its files in Washington and Switzerland <sup>2/</sup> (all other Board offices abroad had been closed by then) for study and possible use as evidence in the war crimes cases.

<sup>1/</sup> See Public Relations.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 1980 to Bern dated June 7, 1945.

VI E - 1. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL  
AGENCIES: OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

In connection with the Board's program of shipping food parcels abroad for distribution by the International Red Cross to enable the survival of unassimilated civilians held in enemy territory, the assistance of the American National Red Cross was helpfully enlisted, on a reimbursable basis, in the packaging of 285,000 food parcels and in making shipping space available to the Board. 1/

Mutually helpful discussions were also held between representatives of the Board and the American Red Cross, particularly on the matter of ways and means of extending relief to civilians interned in enemy territory but not assimilated to the status of prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention.

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1/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.



- 2 -

VI E - 2. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Close cooperation between the Department of State and the Board was maintained throughout the life of the Board as a first essential to the success of its rescue and relief efforts. In order that the aid of United States diplomatic and consular representatives throughout the world might be enlisted, the State Department in January 1944, at the Board's request, dispatched a circular cable to all United States Missions, advising them of the creation of the Board and of its objectives and requesting their assistance in effectuating the rescue policy set forth in the Board's Executive Order.<sup>1/</sup> A follow-up circular airgram was later dispatched by the Department with respect to the work of the Board.<sup>2/</sup>

As the result of these initial instructions and others dispatched by the Board itself from time to time, the framework was established whereby the aid of many governments was eventually enlisted in specific rescue and relief work undertaken by the Board. The guidance and assistance of United States diplomatic officers was of invaluable help to the Board's Special Representatives abroad and to the private agencies in dealings involving negotiation with foreign governments. The success of War Refugee Board operations in Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden and London were due in large measure to the personal help and interest of Ambassador Steinhardt, Minister Harrison, Minister Johnson and Ambassador Winant.

In accordance with the terms of the Executive Order establishing the Board, all Board representatives abroad, with the exception of its representative for Italy and North Africa, were appointed

<sup>1/</sup> Cable No. 634 to London dated January 25, 1944, comprising document 5; subsequently repeated to all other United States Missions.

<sup>2/</sup> Cable No. 774 to London dated January 31, 1944; repeated in substance on February 29, 1944, as a Circular Airgram to other United States Missions comprising document 6.

special attaches of the respective United States Missions with diplomatic status. Office space and other facilities were generously provided the Board's representatives in the legations and embassies to which they were attached.

Mr. George Warren, Adviser to the Secretary of State on Refugees and Displaced Persons, was designated by the State Department to act as its liaison officer with the Board and to handle all war refugee matters for the Department. The Board in turn designated various members of its staff to act as Board liaison officer with the State Department. Through the direct channels of these liaison officers, it was possible to cut red tape and save valuable time in clearing and expediting important Board policies and operations.

Transmission of Board Cables. Until the last months of the board's existence, the only means of communication between the board and its representatives abroad was by cable. As with other government agencies, the Board transmitted and received all its messages through the cable facilities of the State Department. Originally State Department secret codes were used for Board messages. Later, when the volume of Board cables became very great, a special War Refugee Board secret code was devised and used for all Board messages. The coding and decoding of these cables was handled entirely by State Department personnel in Washington and in the legations and embassies abroad. State Department facilities were not only availed of for the Board's own messages but also for the transmission of private agency messages concerning the rescue and relief of victims in enemy territory. By channeling all such messages through the Board, valuable information was obtained by the Department and the Board and coordination of private agency operations greatly facilitated.

In June 1945, as the process of liquidating the Board began, a change was effected in the manner in which the messages of private rescue and relief agencies were transmitted. At the request of the Board, the State Department resumed the function of receiving and relaying by code such messages as the private agencies could not, for satisfactory reasons, dispatch effectively by means of ordinary commercial cable facilities.

State Department Clearance of Board Measures. Since the Board's work was only a part of the total war against Nazi principles, its programs and projects had to be carried out within the framework of the over-all United Nations war effort. State Department concurrence in Board proposals involving political and foreign economic problems was essential. In addition, State Department approval and support of Board proposals to United States Missions abroad was vital to obtaining effective action on the part of the Missions. Accordingly, all Board cables and important policy matters were submitted to the State Department for clearance and consideration in the light of

existing relationships and dealings between the United States and the particular governments involved. In the beginning this procedure frequently resulted in modification and delays. Later, although most of the Board's proposals were bold and unprecedented because of the very nature of its work, clearances were obtained quickly. In working with the State Department the Board constantly emphasized the basic humanitarian purposes of its proposed measures and pressed for quick action. In most instances the humanitarian considerations prevailed and prompt action by the Department of State was forthcoming.

VI E - 3. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Extremely close working relationships were maintained between the Board and the Treasury Department in carrying out the policy of immediate rescue and relief to victims of enemy persecution. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., whose intense interest and vision were in large measure responsible for the establishment of the Board, placed the full force of his department as well as his own active daily support and ideas behind the work of the Board. Key Treasury Department personnel from the Foreign Funds Control and the Office of the General Counsel were assigned to the Board in Washington at the request of the Secretary of the Treasury. The Treasury Department Public Relations staff and facilities were placed at the Board's disposal and the Administrative Services Division of Foreign Funds Control was designated to handle all administrative services, including budget, payroll, personnel and general office management problems, for the Board. Office space in the Main Treasury Building in Washington was made available to the Board.

Immediately after the creation of the Board, the Secretary of the Treasury sent personal cables to the Treasury Department representatives in London, Stockholm, Ankara, Lisbon, Cairo and Algiers requesting them to do everything possible to assist the Board and the United States Missions in their efforts to accomplish the purposes of the Order establishing the Board. In three instances, experienced Treasury representatives already stationed abroad were named Special Representatives of the Board, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury. They were Iver C. Olsen in Stockholm and Leonard Ackermann and James Saxon in Algiers.

Board Programs Facilitated by Close Working Relations Established with Foreign Funds Control. The financing from the United States of rescue and relief operations in enemy territory was possible only as authorized by the Treasury Department under the Trading with the enemy Act. Shortly before the Board was established, the Treasury and State Departments had decided that the United States Government as a part of its licensing policy would



permit the financing of private projects of this kind under specified safeguards designed to bring no benefit to the enemy. A basic license was devised authorizing the financial transactions involved as well as the necessary communication with persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory. This form of license was issued by the Treasury Department to three private agencies prior to the establishment of the Board. With the creation of the Board, all requests for Treasury licenses permitting rescue and relief operations in enemy-controlled areas were channelled through the Board and licenses were issued for such operations only upon the Board's recommendation. A special liaison officer was appointed by the Treasury's Foreign Funds Control to handle and expedite all licensing problems relating to War Refugee Board matters. In this way, it was possible for the government to coordinate private rescue and relief operations, ensure against unnecessary duplication and generally to guide the private agencies in financing and executing Board programs.

The original basic licenses 1/ issued by the Treasury specified the amounts that might be remitted abroad to finance the operations authorized. Later, all basic licenses issued by the Treasury 2/ merely authorized the basic rescue and relief operations. The actual transmission of funds to finance the operations was controlled by separate remittance licenses. Twenty private organizations applied for and received basic licenses from the Treasury for War Refugee Board rescue and relief projects. Special remittance licenses were also issued permitting the transfer of approximately \$20,000,000 from the United States for this work.

Treasury Department Provides Large Amounts of Swiss Franc Exchange. Since Switzerland was the most important center abroad for War Refugee Board operations, the major part of the \$20,000,000 remitted from this country was sent to Switzerland. This called for the acquisition of large amounts of Swiss francs which were very scarce during the months of active Board operations. By special arrangement with the Treasury all private agencies licensed to carry on and finance Board projects from Switzerland were authorized to acquire the necessary Swiss francs from the Treasury Department. In a few cases calling for individual remittances of several million dollars each, special arrangements

- 1/ See, for example, Foreign Funds Control License No. W-2106, as amended, dated February 4, 1944, comprising document 515.  
2/ See, for example, Foreign Funds Control License No. W-2177, dated April 12, 1944, comprising document 516.

were made with the Swiss Government for the acquisition by the United States Treasury of extra quota amounts of Swiss franc exchange to be made available to private American agencies carrying on special Board programs.

Basic Treasury Licenses Permitted Use of Free Exchange in Enemy Territory. The basic licenses under which private organizations carried on rescue and relief operations in enemy and enemy-occupied territory authorized the private agency representatives in neutral countries to acquire the necessary local currencies by any one of three stipulated methods. The first method permitted the acquisition from reliable persons in the neutral countries against reimbursement in the neutral currency, the second permitted the acquisition from persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory against reimbursement after the war, the third permitted the acquisition of the requisite local currency from persons in enemy territory against payment in free exchange or free currency notes. The licenses specified, however, that the third method should not be used if it were feasible to obtain the local funds by either of the first two methods. It was the position of the State and Treasury Departments and the Board that in these cases the saving of lives was paramount to the possibility that small amounts of free exchange might become available in enemy territory. As a matter of fact, of the \$20,000,000 authorized for expenditure on War Refugee Board projects only a very small part in free exchange ever reached enemy territory and most of this went into the hands and private hoards of individual border guards and lesser officials.

No license was ever issued for War Refugee Board purposes permitting the payment of ransom to the Germans.

VI E - 4. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

FOREIGN ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION

At the request of the Board, the Foreign Economic Administration in March 1944 advised its representatives abroad of the creation and objectives of the Board and enumerated various cooperative steps that might be taken toward aiding the Board's program of rescue and relief. 1/

Assistance Afforded in Various Ways. Throughout the life of the Board the views of the Foreign Economic Administration were sought in connection with various matters with which that agency was concerned. Extended discussions were held in connection with the policy of licensing purchases in enemy territory for relief purposes; on the matter of guaranteeing transblockade relief to European neutrals cooperating in rescue and relief efforts; 2/ and in connection with blockade clearance for all War Refugee Board food parcels programs. 3/

The Foreign Economic Administration was also helpful in supplying background information on such matters as the capacity of Turkish railway facilities and in connection with negotiations which eventually led to the making of a vessel-replacement guarantee to the Turkish Government in the course of the Board's efforts to accomplish rescues from Bulgaria and Rumania through Turkey. 4/

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1/ Letter from the Foreign Economic Administration dated March 27, 1944.

2/ See Relief Programs: Relief through the Blockade to Cooperating Neutrals.

3/ See Relief Programs.

4/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

VI E - 5. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP

In a letter dated May 13, 1944, it was proposed by the Office of Censorship that the Board should assume the responsibility, from a security standpoint, for the transmission to and from various foreign points of all messages having to do in any way with refugees. Under the procedure proposed, the Office of Censorship would pass incoming and outgoing messages only with the specific approval of the Board.

In a reply dated May 27, 1944, and in the course of a subsequent conference held in June 1944 representatives of the Board pointed out that by its nature the Board was not primarily a regulatory body, nor was it the only Federal agency concerned with refugee matters. While the Board dealt only with those private agencies which it believed were sincerely interested in rescuing and helping victims of enemy oppression and which it believed to be thoroughly reliable, it did not have intelligence reports on the addressees and senders of such messages, nor did it have facilities for such reports. In order to insure cooperation to the greatest extent possible, however, it was agreed that the Board would designate someone to serve as liaison officer with the Office of Censorship, to examine selected communications and to indicate whether the Board had any special concern with them. Ultimate responsibility, from the security point of view, would remain with the Office of Censorship.<sup>1/</sup>

Trial Review Made of All Cables. Arrangements were subsequently made for the liaison already established with the Office of Censorship by the Foreign Funds Control of the Treasury Department to function for the Board as well.<sup>2/</sup> A trial review of all cables

<sup>1/</sup> The details of this agreement were summarized in a letter from the Office of Censorship dated June 3, 1944, comprising document 517.

<sup>2/</sup> Letter to the Office of Censorship dated June 14, 1944.



relating to refugee matters was later undertaken in order to determine whether or not such a review of the total daily cable traffic was warranted.

As a result of this trial review, the Board on July 21, 1944, advised the Office of Censorship that in the future it would be interested only in the allocation of intercepts dealing with the broader aspects of refugee activity as exemplified in exchanges between private agencies and their field personnel, with specific reference to refugee activity within enemy and enemy-occupied countries; to planned, proposed, and possible means of escape; and to conditions prevailing in refugee camps and concentration areas.1/ Such intercepts were subsequently furnished the Board.

The Foreign Funds Control liaison continued to function for general consultation as well as for the referral of cable messages which, in the opinion of the Office of Censorship, warranted individual referral. Background material relative to various refugee organizations and projects was meanwhile made available by the Board to the Office of Censorship as of possible value to that agency in the carrying out of its mandate.

1/ Letter to the Office of Censorship dated July 21, 1944.

VI E - 6. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

As a first step toward insuring effective, coordinated action between the Board and the Office of War Information, the Board in February 1944 suggested that a policy directive be issued by the Office of War Information for the guidance of persons engaged in the preparation and dissemination by radio and otherwise of information for enemy territory. In this policy directive it was proposed that those responsible for program formulation be instructed to make every effort to keep before the German people the brutal facts concerning Nazi persecution of innocent minorities, as well as the Allies' intention of bringing to justice all persons in any way connected with such crimes. The Board further proposed that the innocent in Axis and satellite territory be asked to demonstrate their good faith by humanitarian deeds and by keeping evidence against the guilty. Finally, the Board asked that it be made clear wherever possible that this Government was taking positive action to aid the victims of Nazi persecution and solicited the cooperation of neutral European countries in the evacuation of refugees to places of safety.

Such a directive was promptly issued.1/

As a result of this directive and of repeated conferences subsequently held by representatives of the two agencies, invaluable cooperation was obtained on the part of Office of War Information representatives, both in the United States and abroad, toward accomplishing the Board's psychological warfare objectives. Programs appealing for tolerance and decency on the one hand and warning of intended retribution on the other, were continuously beamed to Germany and to German-occupied territory by the Office of War Information, and leaflets along the same lines were dropped from the air over Hungary and other satellite countries.2/

1/ Office of War Information Central Directive dated February 1944, comprising document 518.

2/ For a more detailed account of these efforts see Psychological Warfare Programs: Statements and Informational Campaigns Inspired by the Board.

VI E - 7. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

**PRESIDENT'S WAR RELIEF CONTROL BOARD**

Under date of February 9, 1944, the Board was advised by the President's War Relief Control Board that a part of the procedure set up in 1943 in connection with the National War Fund 1/ was the review of budgets or programs of member agencies by the War Relief Control Board, with the advice of an informal committee composed of representatives of various government agencies interested in war relief matters. Budgets of member agencies of the National War Fund for 1944 having been presented, the War Relief Control Board was inviting its Advisory Committee to meet with it for review purposes. Since a number of the budgets included projects for refugee relief, the War Refugee Board was invited to designate a representative to serve on the War Relief Control Board's Advisory Committee.2/ This invitation was accepted, and a Board representative subsequently participated in the Fund's budget reviews.

Recommendations Made re Allocation of Funds. Early in 1944 the Board learned that since June of 1943 the American Federation of Labor through its Labor League for Human Rights and the Congress of Industrial Organizations through its War Relief Committee had been attempting, without success, to obtain allocations from the National War Fund for rescue and relief work in Czechoslovakia and Norway. When certain difficulties which had held up these allocations were brought to the attention of the War Refugee Board, discussions were undertaken with representatives of the War Relief Control Board, the difficulties were resolved, and the allocations obtained.3/

- 1/ The National War Fund was set up to control solicitations, collections, receipts, and distributions of funds and contributions for charities for war-created needs in the United States or foreign countries, with the exception of the American Red Cross, certain religious organizations, and local relief and welfare activities.
- 2/ Letter from the War Relief Control Board dated February 9, 1944, comprising document 519.
- 3/ See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (American Relief for Czechoslovakia and American Relief for Norway) for a more detailed account of these negotiations.

The War Refugee Board subsequently facilitated the carrying out of a number of other war relief programs proposed by private agencies operating under the supervision of the War Relief Control Board. After reviewing the projected operations, the War Refugee Board made recommendations as a result of which substantial allocations were obtained for rescue and relief purposes.<sup>1/</sup> The recommendations of the War Refugee Board were also solicited in connection with allocations made to the American Christian Committee for Refugees, the International Rescue and Relief Committee, and the Unitarian Service Committee, all of which were members of the National War Fund.<sup>2/</sup>

Doubts Resolved re Overlapping of Authority. In March 1944 the War Refugee Board was informally advised by the War Relief Control Board that certain persons had asserted that the provisions of Executive Order 9417, under which the War Refugee Board operated, exempted persons and agencies concerned with refugee relief from complying with requirements made by the President's War Relief Control Board under the provisions of its Executive Order 9205.

In a letter dated March 6, 1944, the War Refugee Board indicated that it saw no overlapping between the two Executive Orders, as it understood them. At the same time, however, in order to resolve any doubts in the minds of the third parties, the Board delegated to the President's War Relief Control Board "such authority, if any, as may have been transferred by Executive Order 9417 from the President's War Relief Control Board to the War Refugee Board."<sup>3/</sup>

- <sup>1/</sup> See Rescue Programs: Other Projects (French Relief Fund) and Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (Belgian War Relief, Friends of Luxembourg, Polish War Relief, and the Queen Wilhelmina Fund.)
- <sup>2/</sup> See Relief Programs: Projects of Private Organizations (American Christian Committee for Refugees, International Rescue and Relief Committee, and Unitarian Service Committee).
- <sup>3/</sup> Letter to the War Relief Control Board dated March 6, 1944, comprising document 520. At the request of the War Relief Control Board, this action was later confirmed in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding dated March 4, 1944, subsequently signed by members of both Boards, comprising document 521.



VI E - 8. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES;  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

THE WAR DEPARTMENT

In January 1944 the Board furnished the War Department with suggested instructions to the appropriate Theatre Commanders concerning the establishment and responsibilities of the Board. Following clearance with the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, a message similar to that proposed was dispatched.1/

Specific requests for assistance were later addressed to the Army in connection with various rescue and relief projects, and in several instances the Army's provision of transportation for refugees rescued from enemy hands proved invaluable, especially in the case of the removal from Italy of refugees destined for the Emergency Refugee Shelter set up by this Government at Oswego, New York;2/ in connection with the removal of a group of Latin American passport holders from Switzerland to a refugee camp at Philippeville in North Africa;3/ and in the case of another group of 700 refugees evacuated by the Army from Switzerland to Italy as the first step in their emigration to Palestine.4/ Vital assistance was obtained from the War Department in the closing months of the war in connection with the delivery of War Refugee Board food parcels to the starving inmates of German concentration camps. The United States Army at the request of the Secretary of War made available to the Board from Army stocks in France quantities of gasoline, lubricating oils and tires needed for trucks obtained by the Board in Switzerland.5/ War Department personnel, both military and civilian, were made available to the Board from time to time for consultation and special assignments.

The Board in turn cooperated with the War Department and with liaison groups set up by the Army to work with the United Nations

1/ Letter from the War Department dated March 3, 1944, comprising document 522.

2/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.

3/ See Rescue through Protective Measures: Exchange.

4/ See Rescue to and through Switzerland.

5/ See Relief Programs: Board's Food Parcels Program.

War Crimes Commission, by making relevant portions of its files available as the source of information and possible evidence relating to European war crimes.1/

1/ See Cooperation with International and Governmental Agencies:  
United Nations War Crimes Commission.

VI E - 9. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

**WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY**

The War Relocation Authority in the Department of the Interior and the Board maintained close working relationships because of their joint responsibilities in connection with the Emergency Refugee Shelter established at Oswego, New York, for refugees evacuated to this country from Southern Italy. Up until the process of the Board's liquidation was begun, over-all responsibility for the operation of the Shelter had been vested in the Board, while actual administrative responsibility had been assigned to the War Relocation Authority. In June 1945 over-all responsibility for the Oswego project was transferred to the War Relocation Authority on the Board's recommendation. 1/

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1/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.

VI E - 10. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES:  
OTHER UNITED STATES AGENCIES

WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION

Invaluable aid was rendered the Board's program of rescue and relief by the War Shipping Administration. Early in 1944, when negotiations with the Turkish Government reached a deadlock because of the Turks' refusal to permit the use of a Turkish vessel for evacuation purposes unless assurances were received that the ship, if lost, would be replaced with a comparable vessel, the Board appealed to the War Shipping Administration, through which a replacement guarantee was promptly obtained. 1/

The War Shipping Administration also materially aided the Board's efforts by detailing a field representative from Cairo to Ankara to assist the Board's representative there in efforts to solve other shipping problems encountered in the Black Sea area. After repeatedly unsuccessful efforts by others to obtain an evacuation ship, another War Shipping Administration representative was detailed to assist the Board's representative in the Mediterranean area, as the result of which a ship was promptly obtained to accomplish the removal of hundreds of refugees from Spain to Camp Lyautey in North Africa. 2/ War Shipping Administration efforts were likewise enlisted in attempts to solve shipping problems involved in evacuating refugees from Yugoslav territory to Italy. 3/

The War Shipping Administration further aided the Board by providing background information on such matters as prevailing insurance and charter rates.

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1/ See Rescue to and through Turkey.

2/ See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: North Africa.

3/ See Rescue to and through Italy.



## VII. COOPERATION WITH PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

Established private American relief agencies concerned with refugee problems had for many years before the beginning of the war in Europe endeavored to save and bring relief to the victims of Nazi persecution. With the outbreak of hostilities, however, resulting in the economic blockade of Europe and prohibitions against trading or communicating with the enemy, it became impossible for these agencies to continue to finance and conduct effective relief and rescue work inside German-controlled areas.

The creation of the War Refugee Board and the pronouncement of a firm national policy to save the persecuted minorities of Europe immediately placed the full force and prestige of the United States Government behind all efforts to save these innocent people. One of the most important functions of the Board was to enable these private agencies fully to utilize their resources for such relief and rescue work, and one of the first steps taken by the Board was to invite private organizations concerned with refugee problems to submit their suggestions for specific action which might be taken to effectuate the objectives for which the Board was established. 1/

In response, detailed proposals were received by the Board from the following organizations: Agudas Israel of America, the American Committee of OSE (a French child-care group), the American Friends of Polish Jews, the American Friends Service Committee, the American Jewish Conference, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Catholic Committee for Refugees, the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, the League for the Liberation of Lithuania, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Netherlands-Jewish Society, the Refugee Economic Corporation, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, the United Palestine Appeal, and the World Jewish Congress.

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1/ Letter dated February 8, 1944, addressed to 94 private welfare organizations, comprising document 523.

According to a detailed analysis prepared on the basis of these responses, the measures proposed fell into eight general categories: appeals by this Government directly and through intermediaries to the German Government for cooperation in the evacuation of European Jews; warnings to the German people and their officials and to the satellites generally; efforts directed especially toward the satellite countries; special relations with neutral European countries; temporary havens and permanent resettlement; proposals implementing evacuation; programs for persons who could not be evacuated; and general suggestions designed to implement the work of the Board financially and through cooperation with other nations and organizations.

Full and impartial consideration was given to all proposals submitted to the Board, from whatever source. Every proposal was carefully weighed by the Board and, where practicable, immediately acted upon.

From the outset, the staff of the Board was always available for consultation with representatives of private agencies, and there was a continuous interchange of information and advice concerning the development of techniques and programs. The work of the Board thus became a joint undertaking of government and private agencies, with the Board operating where only a government could operate, the private agencies wherever they could, and valuable time was gained by making immediate use of all readily available facilities.

For this joint undertaking, a modus operandi was developed whereby the Board obtained for the private agencies governmental permission to send funds into enemy territory, governmental permission to communicate with persons in enemy territory, the help of United States diplomatic personnel in dealing with other governments, the use of government communication channels, and the guidance of government officials in developing and organizing the programs of rescue and relief in enemy territory. The private agencies, on their part, rendered invaluable and outstanding service to the Board in evolving, financing, and executing rescue and relief plans and projects. They were in effect instruments of the government in this field. The agencies had seasoned personnel in the neutral countries, established contacts with underground and resistance workers in enemy territory, deep concern for the problem, and quickly available funds. Largely because of the generosity of the private agencies, principally the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, no feasible program suffered for lack of money.

Every facility was extended for the transmission of messages relating to rescue and relief operations and of funds to finance such operations. Nearly fifteen hundred communications for private organizations were transmitted through the Board to and from their agents and representatives abroad. All requests for licenses

to effect financial transactions incident to rescue and relief activities were channeled through the Board, and a completely coordinated program was thus obtained for such private projects, which were carried out under the guidance and control of the Board's representatives abroad. Approximately \$20,000,000 in private funds was licensed for transfer abroad, over \$15,000,000 of which was provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, over \$1,000,000 by the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee, and over \$300,000 by the World Jewish Congress.<sup>1/</sup>

As a matter of policy, an early decision was made that the Board would not undertake to act on proposals looking to the rescue or assistance of specific individuals except in instances where it was felt that a particular case offered an opportunity to test the workability of a proposal for its possible use in rescuing or assisting groups of refugees.<sup>2/</sup> Many private agencies had the facilities and the personnel to perform a valuable service in assisting individuals and in reuniting families. Accordingly, all persons submitting requests to the Board, and there were many, to initiate action on behalf of any specific individual or individuals were referred to such private organizations.

Many of the organizations which worked with the Board depended almost entirely upon contributions from the general public for their operating funds. Their campaigns to raise these funds represented a vital part of their operations and were important to the Board in proportion to the services rendered by such agencies in the Board's task. Meetings for fund-raising purposes were attended by Secretary Morgenthau, as a member of the Board, and by Executive Directors Pehle and O'Dwyer, all of whom delivered addresses describing the use to which such private agency funds were being put and the urgent need for the continued availability of funds for operations in the refugee rescue and relief field.<sup>3/</sup>

The Board also gave assistance to private agencies in obtaining travel priorities and facilities for representatives whom they desired to send abroad to assist in the development and execution of their rescue and relief programs.

<sup>1/</sup> See Schedule of Private Agency Remittances Authorized by United States Treasury for War Refugee Board Purposes, comprising document 524

<sup>2/</sup> War Refugee Board Press Release No. 3 dated February 9, 1944, comprising document 525.

<sup>3/</sup> See also Public Relations.



## VIII. PUBLIC REGULATIONS

The work of the War Refugee Board was of such a nature that frequent news releases proved unnecessary. Upon the creation of the Board, a radio and press release was issued by the White House describing the Board's establishment and functions <sup>1/</sup> Significant developments concerning the Board's program were subsequently made known to the public in a series of press releases.<sup>2/</sup>

In addition to these regular releases, other announcements of public interest were made by the Board from time to time. In June 1944, at the time of the establishment of the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego, New York, for refugees subsequently evacuated from Southern Italy, there were released to the press copies of President Roosevelt's instructive cable to Ambassador Robert Murphy and of his memorandum to the Secretaries of War, Navy, and Interior, the Director of the Budget, and the Executive Director of the Board concerning this action. The text of the President's message to Congress on June 12, 1944, describing the necessity for opening the camp at Oswego, was similarly released.<sup>3/</sup>

In August 1944 the joint statement of the United States and British Governments concerning acceptance of the Hungarian proposal with respect to the release of Jews was likewise released to the press.<sup>4/</sup>

Atrocities Reports Released. Throughout the Board's existence innumerable reports were received from a variety of sources concerning inhuman persecutions inflicted upon minority groups in German and satellite territory. Many of these reports were eyewitness

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- <sup>1/</sup> Unnumbered White House Release dated January 22, 1944, comprising document 2.
  - <sup>2/</sup> War Refugee Board Press Releases No. 1 through 18, comprising documents 525 through 543. These releases dealt with such matters as the appointment of Board representatives abroad, the text of addresses made by Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau (Release No. 14), Executive Director Pehle (Releases No. 7, 12, and 15), and Executive Director O'Dwyer (Release No. 18), and the change in the Board's directorship (Release No. 17).
  - <sup>3/</sup> See Emergency Refugee Camps and Settlement: United States.
  - <sup>4/</sup> See Rescue from Hungary.



accounts obtained through diplomatic and other channels of unquestioned reliability. Others were reports forwarded through underground channels or made by the victims themselves following their escape to safety outside enemy territory.

Two reports typical of those in the latter category were forwarded to the Board from Bern by Representative McClelland in the summer of 1944 and dealt with conditions in the German concentration and extermination camps at Auschwitz (Oswiecim) and Birkenau.<sup>1/</sup> These reports, which reached Switzerland from Bratislava through Czech underground channels, were independently prepared by prisoners who had escaped from the Nazis, the first by two young Slovak Jews, the second by a Polish major. Seeking to confirm their authenticity before submitting these reports to the Board, Representative McClelland talked with a member of the Bratislava Papal Nuncio in Bern who had personally interviewed the two Jewish youths and pronounced their story convincing. The report of the Polish major was forwarded by the Czech resistance movement in Slovakia to the representative of the Czechoslovakian Government in Geneva, who vouched for the reliability of its author. Moreover, the statements concerning periods of arrival and the countries of origin of Jewish convoys were found by Representative McClelland to check closely with information in the possession of reliable Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in Switzerland as to the departure of such deportees from various European countries.

In the belief that these eyewitness accounts presented truthful descriptions of typical conditions and atrocities with which the public should be acquainted, the Board in November 1944 released copies to the press.<sup>2/</sup> Widespread coverage was afforded the release in newspapers throughout the United States. Editorial coverage was likewise extensive, and several radio programs were devoted to discussions of the reports.

<sup>1/</sup> Dispatch No. 4295 from Bern dated July 6, 1944.

<sup>2/</sup> Unnumbered War Refugee Board press release dated November 26, 1944, comprising document 526.





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